

How Do You Change?

It was the very first time for me to realize that my grandfather and I are living in different cultures. I tried to persuade, explain, and make him understand again and again, but I failed completely.

My family consists of 5 members; my father, mother, younger brother, and 'my soulmate', my grandfather.

He is the person who explains everything about life and society to me most precisely. One day, I said to him.

"I believe Miss Aiko will be the next empress in Japan. Do you think so too?" His answer wasn't what I

expected. He said clearly, "No." Then I asked, "Why isn't it possible in Japan, even though it's possible in

Britain?" His answer was very simple. "This is how it has always been in Japan." However, I wasn't

convinced. I personally believe that we live in an age when women can become even Presidents. The debate

was fired up when my mother joined in. She stated that women could be much more active in society because

they have much more power and strength in some ways than men, for example their experiences of giving birth,

and raising children. Then I asked my grandfather again. "Why do you think the Japanese government is

reluctant to do something for gender equality, like some other countries are doing?" He said, "Our government

can't break the traditions, I guess. I think young people are to blame because they don't go to vote." To be

honest, I couldn't say anything back to him. His answer made think about the issue more deeply and I started

to wonder if my approach to the problem, that is, to blame the government and society, would provide the truth.

A few days passed. I was still pondering the question. Then something became clear to me. Ms. Yuriko

Koike, Governor of Tokyo, was holding an online conference with several female university students. The

participants were asking the Governor exactly the same questions I had asked my grandfather. They were

quite frustrated by the fact that women's status in Japan hasn't really improved, compared to those in other countries, especially the extremely low percentage of women participating in Japan's politics. All questions in the conference were related to why the Japanese government isn't willing to improve the situation. As I listened carefully to the discussion, the answer to the question gradually became crystal clear to me. It is because WE DON'T CHANGE. It's our fault. We, women, hesitate to be on stage. Ms. Koike's answer was very clear, "Just do it!", adding that we are now making good progress where more women can have a good balance in working and raising children.

After watching the conference, I was successful in clarifying the reason why my grandfather and I hadn't been able to agree with each other. It was not due to the differences in our opinions on women's status but truly in our different approaches to what we think we can do to try to make our country better. At first, I had believed that the real cause of women's low status in Japan was due to the laziness of the government, or to society. However, my grandfather implied that women, especially young ones like me, should be involved in the problem because it is our problem, too. He helped me to find the answer for myself. I now believe that it is women in Japan who are responsible for this problem. I know many people think we ourselves can't make changes, hoping someone else may do it for us. However, all women should be expected to do what they can do to make change happen.

We usually say "The old don't understand the young." If you look at generation gaps, or cultural differences between generations, I suggest that you should reflect on your own opinions and sometimes change your ways

of thinking. Whatever others say, there should be surely a key to solve the problem. And for me, my grandfather is still my soulmate, and he continues to give me new insights into life.

(677 words)