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Ortama, Jakob

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**By**

**Jakob Ortama**

## ASIAN VALUES IN JOURNALISM

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I learned communication from Wilbur Schramm. He wrote that communication will be more effective if the communicator is familiar with the frame of reference of the communicant and if there is mutual experience between the two.

As a matter of fact, I was very much influenced by that idea. Way of life, culture as well as values are the main contributors if not the makers of our frame of reference. They are also the ingredients of a person's common experience.

Consequently values do count in communication implicitly also in journalism. To the theme of the topic: are there Asian values in journalism, of which the answer is positive. However, there are some reserves.

Some points should be noted here. One, there are Asian values which are, as true as there are universal values. Second, the way I understand values is dynamic not static: Values are prone to change. Third, as never before in our history, the forces of change are very devastating today.

There is a fourth point that is rather critical. Values permeate all cleavages of human activities not the least politics. In politics it could be very critical.

But again, I would start from the standpoint that there are Asian values in journalism. There are manners that you have to live up to. It is to be reflected in the way you select words and the tone of your sentences. There is among others a lot of euphemism. There are ways and styles known as between the lines in exercising critics.

That is exactly the center piece: Asian values are the more

crucial if you exercise critics to the state as well as to the society.

Critics are welcome, particularly "constructive critics". However, please be considerate, that it does not insult neither disturb or generate destabilizing effect. It brings us to a more comprehensive problem of stability, democracy and economic development.

Look at the South Korean case. They started with an authoritarian government that was to be qualified not by her freedom and civil liberty, but more by her economic performance.

Later on only after 30 years Korea has grown to be an advanced economy and a democratic system.

How about India, a country of more than 500 million people which since its independence has embarked in a democratic path with all its errors and trials?

Well, these are familiar arguments. I picked it up by way of reminding that those are the frame of reference that many of Asian Countries live in.

In this regard, Asian Values don't limit themselves to styles or ways of expressing. Asian values go deeper to the matter of political system. It questions to what extent liberal democracy could go in tandem with economic development. It provokes thoughts of how freedom of the press doesn't harm stability that is conducive for economic reconstruction.

Korean case has demonstrated the legitimacy of the step by step stages. First, what we need is strong and effective Government, albeit authoritarian, that could mobilize the national funds and forces for economic development. After they succeeded to establish infrastructures of education, economics as well as social, then they embarked to a democratic system with its associated civil liberties and freedom of the press.

India demonstrates the contrary. Articulated in a simple way, India shows, democracy works in a developing economy.

There is another approach to the problem. It is now a fact, that there are market economy with varieties. The existence of varieties are due to the different background and conditions of each country, economic as well as ways of life (ideology).

The reality of various market economics are well accepted. That is less the case with the existence of variant democracies. A strong prejudice is slimmering as to the last.

How are Asian values to be perceived vis a vis democracy. No doubt, universal values of democracy are prevailing as for instance formulated in a popular way "of a government from the people, by the people and for the people".

If it is so, then there must be common fundamental mechanism also in democracy. I refer to the essential mechanism of free election and of representation.

Is there any difference in the way power is perceived and exercised? In Asia strong sense of community exists.

There is also a strong orientation towards paternalism. There is a kind of filial loyalty to the power that be. To what extent and in what ways are all those cultural features reshape Asian democracy?

Dealing with democracy as values and structure of government means dealing with power. Is power objective or subjective? For sure, there is a great deal of subjectivity in power.

There is also a great deal of interest in power. In many cases, here starts the problem. It happens not when it affects power in her objective domain, it occurs exactly when it deals with the subjective domain.

We come to the accountability of power. To what extent and how do media are to be perceived as also an agency of democratic

accountability of power that be?

I think it will benefit every party involved, if we think back how it all happened. How issue about Asian values arise again in the last years.

Historically and culturally it goes back to the period of Asian renaissance, Asian awakening, to the days of Asian National movement for independence. It is awareness of our national identity and personality. Asian is distinct, particularly distinct from the west. Asian have their own values as old as if not older than the west.

There is a long way to go from national movement to independence. The decades to build national identity as well as national integration went up hill with errors and trials. Then Asian entered the era of economic development. There is a big achievement. The west calls it a miracle, the economic miracle of East Asia and later on of South East Asia as well.

There is a sense of renewed self confidence as well as national competence. What makes it tick? Asian values as expressed in diligence, hard work, frugality as well as in the capability of mastering modern technology and the way of market economy.

The Asian achievement takes place exactly when some West Countries face decline and even conflict of another nature as in ex Yugoslavia and ex Soviet Union. It has grown into a kind of contrast with declining western values as in the area of family values.

Some Asian leaders with strong gusto are strongly aware of the economic achievement due to Asian Values. And that is why they promote Asian Values as distinct and equal if not supreme.

Towards critics, especially coming from the West, Asian become more sensitive. Particularly so, since Western Critics by media people smell of arrogance and a sense of western supremacy.

Where is the virtue? Somewhere in the middle. It seems that nations today has to be aware of the interdependence state, where we live in. Interdependence brings with it the must of working together and live in a peaceful and creative coexistence. Well, it has to go beyond coexistence. Nations have to work positively together.

Japan is modern and democratic, at the same time that Japan remains Japanese in her cultural values. South Korea followed suit within shorter period. Some of their values have changed, exactly because of their achievement in the economic development. Becoming industrial countries imply undergoing change of values in some areas.

Asia has to beware of it. Even right now, complaints because of changes is every where. From diligence and hard work it has to shift into complacent and easy going.

The strong sense of community is challenged by the upsurge of individualism. The frugal way of life is polluted by the demonstration effects of consumerism.

The ways of expressing and communicating are going to be more business like. Transparency is everywhere. Asian way of life faces strong challenges and there is no way to close the windows and the doors. Asian Values are undergoing changes.

The challenge then is how to manage changes in Asian values.

How about journalism? Again and again, journalism, because of its nature is in the fore front of change. Journalism precisely has to be a vital instrument in the process of change.

It can only adequately cope with the complicated responsibility, if journalism grasp the nature of changes that nations in the world today are confronted with.

It demands intellectual exercise as well as faithfulness to conscience.

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