



Portrayed of Nature Philosophy Through Japanese Cinema: Representation of *Nihonjin no Shizenkan* in Sweet Bean Movie

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Abstract

This study analyzes how Japanese people love nature, as presented in the movie Sweet Bean. Nihonjin no shizenkan is considered one of the Japanese ideal philosophies for valuing nature. The artwork sometimes portrays the abstract concept and how people adore their environment. This study examines the depiction of nihonjin no shizenkan philosophy in contemporary Japanese society, exemplified by the 2015 movie Sweet Bean. The data were gathered using a qualitative approach and the content analysis technique. The theory employed is the shizenkan no kyouiku concept, demonstrated by Sugai Hiroyuki, which refers to the people's way of life to seeing and value nature by heart, represented by back to nature, being one with and an act to respect nature. The film demonstrates that individuals in Japan, limited to their age, continue to practice nihonjin no shizenkan, which is presented by viewing nature as friends or a living thing. Based on the data, we split into two categories: (1) a person can communicate or interact with nature, and (2) see nature material as a living thing. The movie concludes that the interaction between people and nature significantly impacts someone's life and gives influence on businesses. This study can show how the Japanese value nature and any further cultural understanding.

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INTRODUCTION

Based on Japanese art, Japanese society can be considered naturalistic, whereas nature is the same as living things. "Keys to the Japanese Heart and Soul (Wilson, 1996)" examines the link between the subject (human) and the object (nature), with nature referred to as a reality. This fact is commonly used in poetry to represent various flowers or animals. Humans must rely on nature and its outcomes to satisfy food needs, which shows how nature is inseparable in life. Japanese people said they held several *matsuri* (sacred festive) to express gratitude and pleasure to the Deities. Specific works of art, such as gardens in temples or houses, are closely tied to daily human existence and an expression of passion for nature. *Nihonjin no shizenkan* is the Japanese term for the philosophy of nature interpretation.

Shizen is a Chinese character that means to emerge from it and remain unchanging, which implies an attitude that exists, persists, and does not change. *Shizenkan* can be defined as a self-development force and the product of those forces. The phrase is uncommon in old Japanese chronicles such as *kojiki* or *nihon shoki*. However, the Japanese view nature as a manifestation of *Kami* (Deity), who is responsible for everything in life. As a result, the diverse Japanese people's nature philosophy is reflected in their cultural products, such as Zen artwork, chanoyu (tea ceremony), and *ikebana* (the art of flower arrangement) (Kodansha, 1994).

Regarding Japanese people and their love for nature, it is essential to delve into the secrets of Zen Buddhism. Without some knowledge of this, the Japanese character may be complex to appreciate. It does not mean that Zen is everything that moulds the character and general culture of the Japanese people. When Zen is gasped, we can get into the depths of their spiritual life in all its varied expressions with some degree of ease.

Nature is constantly in motion, never at a standstill. If nature is to be loved, it must be caught while moving, and in this way, its aesthetic value must be appraised. However,

appreciating beauty is at the bottom of religion, for without being religious, one cannot detect and enjoy what is genuinely beautiful. Furthermore, there is no denying that Zen gave an immense impetus to the native feeling for nature, not only by sharpening it to the highest degree of sensitiveness but also by giving it a metaphysical and religious background.

It is not a new concept for the Japanese to associate their lives with nature. Dr. Masaru Emoto is a Japanese researcher who explores how words and emotions can alter the water. After, Dr. Masaru Emoto presented his experiment on the effects of language and water in his book *Messages from Water* (1999). The experiment required separating cooked rice into two separate container jars and assigning daily words to each rice jar, which he complimented for the first jar and the second jar, he mocked. As a result, rice that received praise transformed into fermented yellow rice with a pleasant aroma, whereas rice that received scorn transformed into black rice that smelled rotting.

Yusuke Shindo stated that the Japanese people have a natural affinity for nature, appreciate the blessings of nature on agriculture, and are committed to preserving nature for the future (Shindo, 2015:34). Natural disasters such as hurricanes, storms, and earthquakes affect this concept. Nature has become an integral and friendly aspect of Japanese society (Japan, 1986:7). To the Japanese, nature is a good friend, not an adversary.

The interpretation of nature philosophy may be closely connected to Japanese mythology. Japanese people have had to be excellent friends with nature since ancient times, as seen by their necessity for agriculture to produce rice and acclimate people to Japan's four seasons. The evidence for human life's close relationship with nature is not explicated concretely but is associated with mythologies such as Izanagi and Izanami. Guzzetti (1999:18) describes nature's relationship with Japanese mythology as a god and goddess created the sea and vast by using their rods.

Martin (2018), in his previous studies, conveyed that Japanese cinema contains and shows its culture. Japanese cinema focuses on

narrative and aesthetic patterns that differ from other countries. Moreover, another Junior (2013) study presented that Japanese cinema affected emotional factors or bounded rationality. Meanwhile, regarding the Sweet Bean movie, we can see Schoneveld (2022) examines the visuals and narrative within Kawase's movies and Carew (2016) stated that Kawase's upbringing the tradition on the modern world. Somehow, fewer articles examined the nature symbolism. The discourses on Japanese creation concerning nature can be found in other philosophical works, but how can nature be portrayed in cinema? This study tries to follow and find the answer. Therefore, nature philosophy may create a focus for cinematic studies.

As Sugai Hiroyuki stated, *nihonjin no shizenkan* and its relationship to human life experience in an abstract framework, meaning that human life is inextricably linked to nature's influence. Because humans cannot avoid nature in their varied occupations, it becomes a matter of *shizen no kyouiku* (education through nature) to comprehend and utilize nature in daily life. The value can be presented for movie ideas.

The *nihonjin no shizenkan* philosophy in contemporary life may undergo a shift as a result of two significant factors, which are (1) Japan's interest in modernization and (2) American domination of Japan, which resulted in Japan imitating America and Europe, particularly in the fields of technology and science. Along with Japan's transition to a modern state, traditional practices deteriorated or became less properly managed than they once were (Randerson, 2015, p. 173). The preliminary queries arose

from the mentioned discourses, 'how do Japanese people implement the natural philosophy in their lives?'. The study will analyze and describe the answer based on Japanese cinemas.

METHODS

Sweet Bean movie has been chosen for analysis due to the environment and nature symbolism in the language spoken. Many writers define this movie as an emotional story, gentle, sweet, sentimentality, and warm (Henderson (2016); Ide (2016); Sinekdoks (2016)). This film is also famous in Japan and other countries. In this study, we collected the data through content analysis. The stages we took were as follows:

1. We listened and watched the movie and noted the statement that shows nature philosophy.
2. We presented the overview of nature philosophy based on the actor's conversation.
3. We examined the data, which shows that actor conversation is associated with nature and is interrelated with the concept of *shizen no kyouiku*.

This research examines individual life through the lens of *shizenkan* philosophy, namely *shizen no kyouiku* (nature education). Sugai Hiroyuki specifically conveyed the idea of *jiko no ikikata o manabu shizen kansatsu* (natural observation). As seen in Table 1, *shizen no kyouiku* (nature education) is founded on three principles which said (1) *kongen ni kaeru koto* (return to the root), (2) *ittai ni naru koto* (become one with nature), and (3) *kagyou ni tessuru koto* (see the nature by heart).

Table 1. A Design of the Natural Education Based on Outlook on Japanese Way of Nature. Hiroyuki.

Self	Affirmative	Road (to act and life)
Return to the <i>kon'gen</i> (root)	Become <i>ittai</i> (one)	Dedicating to <i>kan'gyou</i> (watching)
Immediate awareness	Be innocent	The lines are integrated and harmonious
Comprehensive Whole unity, wholeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regaining oneself in tranquility ● Staring at life (viewing as life) ● Take a closer look at one thing. ● It is love that you can keep watching as it is without 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Catch it in relation to yourself. (Try it for yourself, not for others) ● Deep, serious, and urgent problem awareness ● Think about what you
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Look at diversity ● See from multiple sides ● Look at relationship ● Long-term view ● At first glance (Look 		

whole) • Read deeply	getting tired of it. • Polish your sensibility and inspire • Have a mind that makes you feel surprised and mysterious.	can do now
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Kongen ni kaeru koto (根源) is a method of thinking or philosophizing in which one perceives something distant as nearby. The forest is portrayed when a person looks at a collection of trees. A distant object is perceived as close, and an abstract object is perceived as tangible. *Ittai ni naru koto* (一体) (become one with nature) combines feelings (heart) and bodily feelings that deepen the oneness relationship with nature, therefore organically establishing a reconnection with nature. Assimilation is a natural process. Humans require nature to survive and naturally align themselves with it. *Kagyou ni tessuru koto* (勸行) (see the nature by heart) embodies awareness. The heart truth is expressed just as it is. The core of Japanese culture is practising the *shizen* way of life and achieving *onozukara* (I) status. All human actions are pathways that cross paths with nature.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The story of Sweet Bean involves the main character, Tokue, who is 65 years old, on her retirement day. One day, she notices that a business is hiring on her walk. Tokue is confident in her abilities to create red bean paste and wants to assist the business in selling dorayaki. The business owner, Shintaro, believes she is too elderly to work and declines politely. However, other consumers adored Tokue's red bean paste, and he hastened to recruit her. The discussion will not examine how dorayaki is sold at the store but rather the symbol of how Tokue interacts as a store employee. Her admiration for nature is shown in her work and language. The discussion will describe Tokue's links with nature.

(1)

Tokue: ああ、皆、腕振ってる。
Aa, minna, ude futteru.
Look, they are waving their hands.
(minutes 20:30)

Tokue waved at the swaying tree. She takes it for granted that the tree joins her journey and extends hospitality.

(2)

Tokue: 開店 11 時でしょう。そしたら、明日は
お天道様が、顔に出す前に仕組み始め
ましょう。
Kaiten wa juu ichi ji deshou. Soshitara,
ashita wa otentou sama ga, kao dasu mae ni
shikumi o hajimemashou.
We will be preparing to make the sweet
bean paste before Mr. Sun arises and
shows his face.
(minute 24:08)

Tokue and Shintaro are making bean paste to sell in Dorayaki. Tokue had been waiting and stirring the beans patiently since dawn. Lord of the Sun is a term Tokue uses to honour the sun.

(3)

Shintaro : いろいろややこしいですね
Iro iro yyakoshi desune.
It's difficult....
Tokue : は、おもてなしだから
Ha, omonenashi dakara
Because it's a courtesy.
Shintaro : おもてなし? お客ですか。
Omonenashi? *Okyaku desuka?*
Courtesy? Are you talking about
customer?
Tokue : いや、まめよ
Iya, mame yo.
No, it's the bean
Shintaro : まめ?
Mame?
Bean?
Tokue : せっかく来てくれたんだから、
畑から
Sekkakukitekuretan *dakara.*
Hatake kara.
Because they come here from
long journey, from the field.
(minute 28:24)

This is an exchange conversation between Shintaro and Tokue during making bean paste. Tokue said that beans are like customers and must

be treated well. Although she knew the beans would ripen after being cooked, she would be glad to get the beans ready. Shintaro thinks that courtesy is only given to the customer. At this time, Shintaro seems not to believe what he is hearing and trying to understand.

(4)

Shintaro : また待つですか

Mata matsu desuka

Are we waiting again?

Tokue : いきなり煮たのも失礼でしょう。先は水に馴染んでもらわないとね。だけど、お見合いみたいなまるであとは若いを2人でどうぞ。

Ikinari nitara shitsurei deshou. Mazu wa mizu ni najin de morawanai to ne. Dakedo, omiaimitai na marude atowa wakai o futari de douzo.

It would be rude if we boiled them suddenly. First, let's them become friends with the water. But, if they looked like people on *omiaimitai*, then let's please them.

(minute 31:15)

In this conversation, Shintaro discusses the method of making red beans. Tokue thinks that Beans and Sugar are young people who meet at a matchmaking event and get to know each other. Tokue believes that sugar and beans are living things that must be acquainted with the bean paste to taste the sweetness. Tokue believes that sugar and red beans should become acquainted. Shintaro responds, "Are we going to wait much longer?" since he is impatient about thoroughly cooking the red bean paste.

(5)

Tokue : 頑張りなさいよ

Ganbarinasai yo.

Keep up the spirit

(minute 42:00)

Tokue cheered up the bean paste that she had made. She is talking to Beans like her own friend.

(6)

Tokue : あんを炊いてる時の私はいつもの言葉に言う、耳をすましていました。それは、小豆が見てきた雨の日やれの日をすることです。どんなに風に吹かれて小豆がここまでやってきたのか？ 旅の話聞いてあげることもそう聞くんです。

このようにあるものは全て言葉を持っていると私は信じています。日差しや風に対してでさえ、耳を澄ますことができるのでわないかと思うのです。

An wo taiteru toki no watashi wa itsumo azuki no kotoba ni iu, mimi wo sumashiteimashita. Sore wa, azuki ga mitekita ame no hi ya hare no hi wo souzou suru koto desu. Donna kaze ni fukarete azuki ga koko made yattekita no ka?. Tabi no hanashi wo kite ageru koto sou kikundesu. Kono you ni aru mono wa subete kotoba o motteiru to watashi wa shinjiteimasu. Hizashi ya kaze ni taishite de sae, mimi wo sumasu koto ga dekiru no dewanai ka to omou no desu.

When I'm making bean paste, I always pay close attention to the beans' communication. I imagined the beans' rainy and sunny days, I imagined what brought the beans here, and I listened to the beans' story. I believe that everyone has a tale to tell in this world; I believe that even the sun and the wind have a story.

(minute 1:13:01)

At the film's conclusion, Tokue sits and gazes up at the sky. She considered the path beans take before making them red beans. The bean has encountered several tales, including rain and heat. Everything in nature, she believes, has a narrative.

(7)

Wakana : 初めて徳江さんに会ったとき、二人で月を見たんです。その桜木の上にお月様が出ていて綺麗だから見ようって徳江さんが、それで二人で月を見ながら、マルヴィは預かってくれると言ったんです。徳江さんとお月様と私と三人の約束だった。

Hajimete Tokue san ni atta toki, futari de tsuki o mitan desu. Soko no Sakura ki no ue ni o tsukisama ga deteite kirei dakara miyou tte Tokue san ga, sore de futari de tsuki o minagara, Marvy wa azukattekuru to ittan desu. Tokue san to

otsukisama to watashi to san nin no yakusoku datta.

When I met Tokue-san for the first time, we both saw the moon. When Lord Moon emerged atop the cherry blossom tree, Tokue-san stated, "Because (the moon) is so lovely, let us watch." Then, as we both gazed at the moon, Tokue-san stated that she would watch after Marvy (Wakana's pet bird). That is the commitment she has made to me and Mr. Moon. (minute 1:18:14)

Wakana used the honorific to call the "moon" when talking about Tokue. She is the store's customer.

Discussion

We found seven sequences where the characters talk about nature associated with everyday activities. *Ittai* is heavily influenced by

Tokue's view of red beans as living things. Meanwhile, "the sun" is called "lord", indicating a direction toward humans. This connection demonstrates that natural things are understood and live in the same way humans do. The main character contemplates the lengthy journey of red beans from the farm to become a paste in the idea of *kongen*. She demonstrates abstract vision, demonstrating that red beans have a way of life from a distance. *Kangyou* embodies the attitude of reverence for nature and all of its components. The leaves of a tree flying in the wind symbolize a warm welcome in the movie. Tokue did not instantly respond to the sign but smiled and offered greetings. *Kangyou* is a human action motivated by understanding how humans perceive nature. The following Table 2 illustrates the categorization of analysis that can be found in the movie:

Table 2. Discussion Result

Categorization	根源 (<i>kongen</i>)	一体 (<i>ittai</i>)	勸行 (<i>kangyou</i>)
Interaction with natural objects (trees, sun, natural products)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking about the life of beans from the fields Imagining stories experienced by wind and natural products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calling the Sun as "Mr", pr using honorific to refer to Sun Calling the Moon as "Mr", or using honorific to refer to Moon Thinking that the wind conveys a message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waving to the leaves of the tree
Treating natural products as living things	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treats beans and sugar as friend and living things, as they have their own journey Treats beans as human and they have their perfect matchmaking Give courtesy to beans and sugar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making promise to the moon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human lives to hear nature product life stories

The film demonstrates how the philosophy of nature may help humans succeed in life if humans can respect nature. We split categorization into two: (1) human contact with nature, such as trees, the sun,

and nature goods (farm products), and (2) nature products being treated as living creatures. Based on the philosophy of *shizen no kyouiku*, as seen in Table 2, the story's interaction with nature occurs in most scenes. Not all characters in the movie have direct contact with nature, as Shintaro views everything through the lens of businesses (selling dorayaki and making a profit) and time efficiency (buying red bean paste because it takes a long time to make) in contrast to Tokue, who appears to regard nature and the products as the essence of human achievement in nature-based activities.

CONCLUSION

Shizen no kyouiku is a Japanese ideology that explains to people who appreciate nature and its natural products. There is no definitive date for the emergence of this idea in Japan. Shinto beliefs or Zen Buddhism may have affected the mindset of the Japanese, who are highly connected to nature. Several sequences in the Sweet Bean film depict the character engaging with nature or even believing that the product of nature is a living thing. However, the business owner does not entirely understand Tokue's language. The character's contact with nature items depicts most scenarios, such as conversing with red beans, making friends with red beans, or smiling.

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