

Loser Dog

A generation ago in Japan, a woman who had reached the age of 25 without marrying was said to be like Christmas cake on December 25th. In other words, she was already past her best time for marrying. Those days have long disappeared. Now the average age of marriage for a Japanese woman is 28 years old.

However the image that a woman must get married in order to be fully accepted into society remains. This thinking probably comes from a time in the past when the goal of almost every woman was to get married and have children. Why should women have to follow this rule? Why should a woman have to get married and then rely on a man in order to be viewed as successful?

A recent book has used the term “loser dog” to describe women over 30 years old who are not married and have no children. For women who are married, the author used the term “winner dog”. Using the term “loser”, follows the stereotype discussed above in which women who are not married are considered to have failed in life. However, the term “loser dog” may be taking on a new meaning. As society becomes less conservative in its thinking, and as women gain more social status, “loser dog” may no longer mean a woman is a loser.

More than one quarter of women over 30 in Japan are single and this portion continues to rise each year. Many of them have jobs and apartments of their own. On the other hand, married women often have to rely on their husbands for money. The independence of older, unmarried women suggests the opposite. Rather than being losers, they represent a kind of winner.

It is interesting that the term “loser dog” focuses only on women when, in fact, there must be an equal number of unmarried, childless men as well. This contrast probably reflects some unfairness in Japanese society, even though a woman wrote the book and invented the term.

The discussion taking place in Japan about the political correctness of this term is healthy, because it means that people are beginning to question old stereotypes. Japan is an old country with long traditions and customs, the history is long and also it seems to take us longer to change than other countries.

It might take a long time to elevate the status of women in Japan but the discussion about “loser women” may be a step in the right direction.