

# Asian values and human rights book review sample

[Parts of the World, Asia](#)



Question One: Is there a settled vision of human rights as the western idealists, academics, human rights crusaders and some politicians would have people believe? This question emanates from the discourse on alternative perspective by Joseph Chan on page 29 of Chapter 3 in the second paragraph towards the last sentence. Chan is at pains to explain how dissatisfied he is, with advocates and lawyers in conferences who deprecate the Asian values of human rights citing them as an excuse for the continued violation of human rights. He then states that these human rights advocates and lawyers constantly call on the Asian states to follow religiously the settled vision of human rights as espoused in Western democracies instead of setting their own values. He then proffers that there is no such thing as a settled vision of human rights in the ensuing paragraph of the same page 29. He argues that the norms and institutions of human rights and democracy are not static but are instead evolving. He then goes further to claim, like some commentators and politicians in the Asian states that the western notion of democracy and human rights always seeks to serve their own interests. To Chan, the West is not equally beyond reproach on matters of human rights based on their prior history in imperialism and colonialism.

Question Two: Closely intertwined to the first question above is the question, does the idea of universal human rights allow for different cultural or ideological interpretations? Chan again argues that it does. In the first paragraph of page 30 of the paper, he glosses over the matter of ideological and cultural interpretations to the issue of human rights. In the succeeding paragraph on the same page, he poses the very question. The second paragraph on the same page 30 provides his view on the subject. This is that

the whole concept of universal human rights is subject to the various cultural and ideological interpretations that are present in the world. In my personal view as offered, I disagreed with this view on grounds that allowing for such interpretations some of which are as strange as they are conflicting, would defeat the very purpose of human rights. Human rights are universal and human beings obtain these rights by virtue of their being human and no more.

Question Three: The third and final question raised in my paper from the journal is the issue as to whether Asian cultures and values have anything to contribute to the discourse on human rights. This question is posed in a similar fashion on page 30 in the second paragraph by Chan. Chan argues that Asian cultures and values do indeed have a lot to contribute to the discourse on human rights. To this end, he makes reference to the good Asian values such as regard for the family, ethics, honesty and individual responsibility. However, Chan delves deeper into the subject in a substantial manner in paragraph two of page 34 continuing all the way to page 36. In this text, he first confronts the question as to whether there are any values that are specifically and distinctively Asian. He then proceeds to state that values such as strong family ties, regard for education, respect for authority and willingness to work hard are values extolled by Singaporeans and Asians in general. As such, he concludes that the same values can be borrowed or exported in the human rights corpus.

## References

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Tharoor, S. (2008). Are Human Rights Universal? *World Policy Journal* , 50-57.