

Jay ford: a rediscovery



JAY FORD: A REDISCOVERY The current paper is aimed at summarizing the experiences and the self-realization of Jay Ford in Kenya. Having spent some time in Kenya as part of an exchange programme, Jay has understood that there are numerous cultures all around the world that are at par or maybe even superior to the western one in some respects. The Kenyan experience has led Jay to change his perception to the truth that human perceptions are of a higher value than the justification of superiority on the basis of economic or intellectual might.

The first glaring contrast between the American and east African attitude arises from the fact that unlike the west, people in Africa welcome visitors as though they were their own family members and extend all forms of hospitality that is within their reach. Thus, no distinction is made when it comes to welcoming a stranger to a warm meal or a cozy bed. The fact that most African families are extremely poor does not deter them from sharing anything that they have with the visitor, a fact that is so unheard of in the west. In the west, access to public spaces is built on the foundation of a sense of orderliness (and thereby adds a feather to the mechanical way of life that characterizes the western world). This concept is imbibed into people right from their childhood. But, people in Africa have a different perception towards accessing public spaces. Here, moving in masses is seen as a way of aggressive expression that can be termed as an 'Organized chaos'.

Another important contrast in this regard is the fact that one treats his/her elders with respect for his entire life. In other words, Jay wants to signify that unlike in the west, there is a sense of deep-rooted respect within the African society for one's elders and is irrelevant of the fact that the elders may be

living or dead. There is also a strong sense of bonding among Africans so much so that they consider a casual visitor as an integral part of their family and forge an unbreakable relationship with them. This is evident from Jay's visit to Uganda where his host treats him as her own child. Under African culture, building relationships is based on human values rather than on materialistic factors, which is so characteristic of the west. This can be understood from the fact that treating a stranger to a meal or a bed is considered an Honor whereas; a visitor is generally regarded as a burden by most western families.

In the west, any free time is meant to be properly utilized for the completion of any job (useful). In fact, free time is considered to be the outcome of deficient planning and is perceived as something waste. But, Africans believe that free time is suppose to be used for the exchange of ideas and gaining peace of mind. In Africa, people believe in the fact that things will get done when they are supposed to get done. In the west, the quest for knowledge is a matter of securing higher and higher grades so as to rake in more and more economic benefits. Gaining knowledge is seen as a parameter of intellectual success and there is a wide gap between what one actually learns and what one has to face with practically speaking. Though there are severe shortages of the requisite resources, Jay finds that Africans in general know much more about their surroundings (in fact much more beyond that) than he would have known about his own place (New York). This stems from the fact that Africans emphasize on the aspect of learning from observation. This combined with the fact that the knowledge is transferred from generation to generation gives Africans the access to knowledge not only about their local area (through their personal experiences) but also about

other regions as well.

Therefore, in short, Jay wants to signify that there is nothing great about western culture over the so-called primitive ones (Africa especially) and stresses that this can only be understood through personal experience.