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Deviant behaviour of young people in Japan – a cultural peculiarity or forecast of the future

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In the eighties of the past century, Japan was a country with record economic growth and technological development about which only the most developed countries of the European Union can dream. In spite of a crisis in the nineties, Japan is still considered to be one of the richest countries in the world; in criminological terms, it is characterized by an exceptionally low crime rate and considered as a sort of »oasis of safety« among post-industrial countries. However, contrary to these appearances, there is an emergence of more and more unusual forms of deviant behaviour among young people, if we use a broader definition of juvenile delinquency, which encompasses in addition to criminal offences and misdemeanours also types of conduct which are harmful to oneself and to others in the family and in the public.

Among the most mass forms of deviant behaviour of young Japanese is the **hikikomori** syndrome, which means complete voluntary exclusion from society, and **enjo kosai**, denoting the voluntary prostitution of secondary school girls. A trend which is also causing much concern but does not have a mass character, is the **group suicide of young people, agreed upon through the internet** communication.

The hikikomori syndrome is present among Japan students and young adults who have completely failed in school or at job and shut themselves in their rooms for entire days playing videogames, looking at cartoons, participating in internet chats and sleeping all the remaining time until they lose all their social skills and – similar to inmates – are no longer capable of reintegrating themselves into society. The phenomenonjo kosai refers to Japan secondary school girls, who date older men for money and offer them sexual services. The principal reasons for such conduct are extreme materialism and a lack of moral principles in the young generation. Group suicides of young people agreed through the internet have not so far been sufficiently explained.

The question is whether such forms of deviant behaviour of the young represent a cultural peculiarity of Japan or whether they will erode every society that achieves such economic and technological development.

Key words: deviant behaviour, teens, social pathology, exclusion from society, prostitution, group suicide, Japan

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