

# Australia's View of Asia

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DALMENY, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA, November 10, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- 'The Karma of Culture' by Raja Arasa Ratnam was written at the turn of the century, and published in 2003.

The first Australian Census of this century showed that the majority of Asians in Australia were from East Asia (of a light skin colour); and that the majority had declared themselves as Christian.

Although a non-discriminatory immigration policy had been introduced in the 1970s, entry from the sub-continent had been constrained. However, some years after entry had been thrown open fully, a researcher reported that immigrants from the sub-continent had the highest income of all Asian immigrants.

The following extracts from 'The Karma of Culture' relate to Australia's approach to Asia at that time.

" This is the nation (my nation too) which, like an octopus, is waving a tentacle towards what it calls Asia, wanting parts of it badly, but only at times; and always only on its own terms. The thought that ASEAN might, by linking up with China, Japan and Korea in some evolving trajectory, eventually create an East Asian regional identity, frightens some Aussie observers. It can't work, says one, because 'there has never been a single Asian civilisation or a successful Asian unity outside hegemonic conquest.'

So? What could one say about a single North American civilisation? Or about a single Western or even European unity in history?

Asians are different. And, demonstrably, 'Asia is one' (as proclaimed by a famous Japanese artist a century or so ago). This is because non-Islamic Asia has common traditions of long duration - essentially in its approach to religion and social organisation, but also in its shared cultures and art. All of Asia is evolving towards economic and political freedom, having shared the same enemy, and the same battles and suffering."

"What is it that Australia wants from, and in, Asia? ... its political leaders are divided on whether it is part of Asia geo-politically, economically or culturally ... "

"Some Aussies deny that Australia is within the Asian geographical region. Some want Australia to be part of Asia only in an economic configuration ... Some want a gradual merging in all essential aspects of intercourse, relying upon the newly-accepted East Asian business immigrant.

Some are afraid that merging will result in the loss of the claim to be the local 'top dog' essentially in human rights terms. In any event, Asian nations will surely not accept any outpost of Western neo-colonialism, whether economic or religious, as relevant to its future. In the meantime, Australian policy advisers will have to think long and hard about Australia's identity, and the relations we will seek ... "

"Is Australia's principal aim in reaching out to Asia then merely to attract the network of overseas Chinese and their money and contacts? Does this explain the preponderance of new citizens who are wealthy, and mainly of Chinese descent, whether they are from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia,

Singapore, Indonesia, and other neighbouring countries? It certainly looks like it. It would therefore be useful to know what those new arrivals have contributed to developing Australia.”

“Under the Pacific Rim Strategy (the successor to Japan's failed wartime Co-prosperity Sphere which, as a resident of Japanese-occupied Malaya, I was happy to see fail), Australia was to supply minerals, energy and foodstuffs to a region dominated by the U.S.A. and Japan. More recently, a writer suggested that Australia's attractions to the super-rich Asians were only beautiful beaches, casinos and good oysters! What about our women, I challenge.

Therefore, why should China (and related nations) support Australia's new but equivocal urge to become enmeshed with those parts of that vast Asian continent which it considers relevant for its future? China will, of course, be important to European nations. As de Gaulle once said, ‘It will not be any European statesman who will unite Europe: Europe will be united by the Chinese.’”

“It was always difficult for Australia to relate to Asia in many areas of intercourse. Diplomatic relations are fine - but this is not what enmeshing with Asia is about. Understanding - indeed, wanting to understand - Asian cultural stances, in all their Asian diversity is probably the biggest hurdle. This applies to decision-making; the nature and means of dialogue; the establishment of trade and commercial channels; the use of Asian languages and non-verbal gestures in all their subtlety; the understanding of the symbolism and cultural values of the very varied Asian ethnic communities; the recognition of authority structures and inter-tribal relations; a necessary humility visible to the Asians (for they have reasons to distrust whites, whether colonial, post-colonial or eco-colonial); sensitivity to religion-derived practices, and modes of conduct and speech; respect for people and things not respected in the West, eg. age, tradition, custom; and being able to turn a blind eye (perhaps only into the immediate future) to certain commercial practices that one might culturally find abhorrent or unacceptable. When in Rome ... !”

‘The Karma of Culture’ is available as an ebook with Amazon at \$US 2.99.

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