



Japan's Emperor Akihito, center left, and Empress Michiko, center right, smile to Prince Hisahito, fifth from right, as their imperial family members gather for the annual official photo session for the new year at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Japan. Also pictured are from left, Crown Princess Masako, Crown Prince Naruhito, Princess Aiko, Prince Akishino, Princess Kiko, Princess Mako and Princess Kako. (Picture Courtesy AP)



Japanese Crown Prince Naruhito, Crown Princess Masako, and their daughter Princess Aiko wave to the media during a visit to Shiosai Park in Hayama, in Kanagawa prefecture in suburban Tokyo on November 7 last year



Crown Princess Masako with her daughter Princess Aiko



Princess Aiko with her mother Princess Masako

SENALI S. PERERA

She looks like any normal, happy-go-lucky little girl. At times laughing freely, Princess Aiko of Japan indulges in boisterous games with school friends, at others sitting quietly at her studies. The smiling face would remind you of a cuddly doll and her eyes are all glistening beads. Aiko, Princess Toshi is the child of the heir apparent to the Japanese throne, Crown Prince Naruhito and his wife Crown Princess Masako.

Born on December 1 2001, she is the granddaughter of Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko. Her personal name Aiko means "a person who loves others." She also has an imperial title, Princess Toshi, which means "a person who respects others." In a break with tradition, her name was chosen by her parents, instead of by the emperor. It was selected from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Mencius. In clause 56 of Li Lou II, Mencius said "One who loves others will be constantly loved by them; one who

Aiko, the Princess of Love

respects others will be constantly respected by them.

Princess Aiko began her education at Gakushuin Kindergarten on April 3, 2006. She graduated from the school on March 15, 2008. At the age of eight, Princess Aiko's fairytale existence seems troubled by problems at school. In early March, 2010, she began to stay home from school due to being bullied by her elementary school classmates.

Japanese Media revealed that she had been suffering from stomach aches and anxiety attacks caused by this incident. She had to be accompanied to school by her mother for about 18 months, but has been going by herself this year. Princess Masako herself suffers from a form of depression reportedly brought on by the stress of royal life and has remained largely out of the public eye for the past few years.

Recently, the Princess is said to be enjoying an active school life. She belongs to the basketball club and she is also a member of the school orchestra where she plays the cello. In the first semester in 2012, Aiko served on the environment beautification committee, and in the second semester she served on the health committee. She also attended an English seminar, which was provided as an extracurricular class.

On Princess Aiko's eighth birthday, it was revealed her interests include but are not limited to: writing Kanji characters, (Kanji characters are the adopted logographic Chinese characters that are used in the modern Japanese writing system), calligraphy, jump rope, playing piano and violin,



The only daughter of Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako at the age of 10

and writing poetry. At age nine, Princess suffered from pneumonia.

When Emperor Akihito underwent heart surgery in February last year, Princess Aiko sent a letter and flowers she had picked from the garden of the Crown Prince's Residence. In the same year in November, during the family vacation at the Imperial Villa in Hayama, Kanagawa Prefecture, she harvested daikon radishes, tomatoes and other vegetables at a nearby farming experience facility. She later brought the vegetables to the emperor and empress.

She tries hard to save electricity and water, taking such steps as not using extra electricity to heat or cool the room and has been working hard to improve her English-language abilities.

The birth of Princess Aiko sparked debate in Japan about whether The Imperial Household Law of 1947 should be changed as to allow a woman to inherit the Chrysanthemum Throne (the throne of the Emperor of Japan) instead of a man, even her brother. Some conservative scholars argue that the women's reigns were temporary and that male-only succession tradition must be maintained in the 21st century.

A government-appointed panel of experts submitted a report on October 25, 2005, recommending that the Imperial succession law be amended to permit absolute primogeniture which allows a woman to inherit the throne.

But on September 6, 2006, crown Prince's younger brother, Prince Akishino and his wife Princess Kiko had a son, Hisahito, providing the first male heir to be born in the imperial family in 41 years. On January 3, 2007, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced that he would drop the proposal to alter the Imperial Household Law. Therefore, it seems unlikely that the succession laws will be changed to allow Princess Aiko to become reigning Empress.

Every girl dreams about being a princess. But being a princess is not all glamour and fairytales. Through the hardships, Princess Aiko continues to shine and she will one day be a strong role model. The journey has just begun.



Baby Princess Aiko with Prince Crown Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako



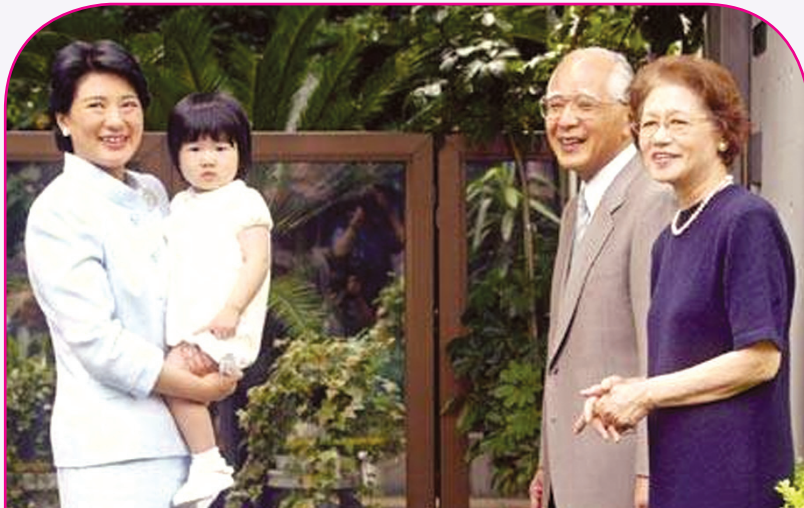
Japan's Princess Toshi with her father Crown Prince Naruhito and her mother Crown Princess Masako



Princess Aiko with her parents Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako and pet dogs



Royalty visits Disney! Japan's Princess Aiko made an appearance at Tokyo DisneySea with her parents Crown Prince Naruhito and Princess Masako on March 13, 2006



Princess Aiko of Japan during her first visit to the home of her maternal grandparents.



On the way to school