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Buddhism came to Japan in the 6th century A.D. Jodo-Shinshu was founded by Shinran (1173-1263). It is often referred to as „Shin-Buddhism“. This „Shin“ comes from „Shin“ (真) in „Jodo-Shinshu (浄土真宗)“ and means truth (眞実). Jodo-Shinshu teaches, that Buddhism exists for all human beings without discrimination or condition...

Prayer

Yuka Komatsu

Over time, receiving the teaching of Jodoshinshu, I realized that many things are different from what I had thought earlier. One of those things was „prayer“. „Prayer“ is a very intimate thing for everyone. I think not only „prayer“ of Faith or Religion, but people regard wishes in everyday life as „prayer“. In my estimation that is a very human action to ask God for health, security, for everything to go smoothly, etc. or to express them as words or having them in your heart.

In my native country Japan it is often written or said „I pray for your health“ as one example to express that one is thinking about others. As a child I thought „prayer“ to be worthwhile and I often engaged in it. Everywhere and always I often did, either expressing it or just thinking it. I thought it best, to pray not for myself but for others' benefit and therefore I „prayed“ for „peace“, „health of my family“, „fortune of friends“, or „for natural disasters not to happen“. Every time I „prayed“ for myself, I felt remorse and apologized to god for it. But even though I took great care, very often my wishes were for my own benefit. I thought, they were for others but somehow I was always included too. I even imagined wishes, which might please God. For that I felt ashamed and often apologized to God. But even in this apology I recognized my calculating attitude to please God and I realized not having changed at all. An endless circle of self-centered wishes and apologizing for them weighed heavily on me. „Prayer“ of my former self was the aspiration of having my own desires fulfilled and addressing God with them. Also I often heard that strong pure „prayer“ can work miracles. I also heard, humans had the ability to develop great ability and power through their



Sermon under the tree (3) Buddha

But one Day Buddha noticed dirt in the form of old skin on himself. After having returned from the mountain where he performed his training, he cleansed himself in the river.

Afterwards he meditated under a sacred tree (ficus religiosa). Finally the enlightenment revealed itself to him. Then he understood what truth was and what human beings were. After six years of hard practice he stopped those endeavours and under the sacred tree in deep meditation he became Buddha.

own strong wishes. In Japan there is a saying: „Incredible power facing fire“, meaning that in threatening situations one is able to develop great power. I even heard that science proved positive thinking to produce power and that (for example) athletes use this power. Maybe this is effective self-suggestion. I hope that this research will continue and to deepen further.

But that kind of power does not exist always nor everywhere. In a fight there are always winners and losers. No matter how fervently you pray, sometimes wishes are just not being fulfilled, you lose, and sometimes you might even lose your life. Even accidents or natural disasters cannot be avoided. The wishes imagined by oneself are neither secure nor complete. But my former self thought my own wishes to be „prayer“. Later hearing sermons about „prayer“ in Jodoshinshu, I was really surprised, because it was completely different from my thoughts. Firstly, we do not „pray“ for our own wishes but we „pray“ to „truth“. The solid and immutably stable „truth“. „Truth“ is an existence of eternal span. This is „religion“ being provided for us as Heart-centre-teaching. The never unstable „truth teaching“, existing eternally for each and everyone of us all. We answer to „truth“ as „prayer“. I have understood receiving this „truth“ and „pray“ (answer) with „Namu Amida Butsu“. When I received this sermon, I got a feeling of having awakened from an erroneous way.

The „teaching“ exists always for us but it is difficult to perceive. We ignore the „teaching“. We want to do whatever we wish, we want to attain a higher position disregarding or even hurting others. Also we want to immerse ourselves in esoteric things and there are even humans who pretend to have knowledge about „former lives“ / “after death“. Buddha’s teaching is for us living beings right now. As „religion“ it is constantly provided for us in order for us to understand how we should be as human beings. When we perceive our receiving this teaching, then we answer with „prayer“. Acknowledging the true human form, contemplating ourselves, apologizing and expressing gratitude.

Even now I have countless wishes. I sometimes do exercises similar to meditation in order to improve my memory. Also when a friend gives me a talisman for luck, I rejoice about his/her kind heart and value it highly. But I no longer associate those kinds of things with „religion“ and „prayer“. We answer the truth-teaching, always existing for us, by saying „Yes, I am receiving this teaching, thank you!“. For I have understood this to be „prayer“ in Jodoshinshu.

