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Kami/Deity Is Already There for us

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Treading on a Path the Founder Once Walked Too

The most important thing I would like to learn from the faith of our dear Founder is that “People Who are suffering are allowed to transform themselves into children of *Kami/Deity*.” I will explain: “People who are suffering will be transformed into people with *Kami’s* blessings. They will be allowed to become *Kami’s* true children.” At our Konko church, I regularly pursue this objective with our dear members.

When the Founder was still alive, a lady, Ms. Kiyō Shiwaku, went to his *hiromae* (worship room) for the Founder’s Sacred Mediation. As she approached the Founder sitting at the Mediation Seat, Kiyō spoke to him, “I have been practicing faith for some time now, but I am still poor.” (GI: Shiwaku Kiyō, 2) She must have thought that saying this to the Founder was very meaningless, because her poverty was not the Founder’s fault and the Founder could not work a miracle for her destitute situation. Kiyō, however, could not resist a desire to share her impoverished circumstance with the Founder, I believe. Kiyō must have wanted to complain, “I have been practicing in *Kami* ardently for many years. This is a true story. Then why on earth can’t I ever get out of this state of poverty? Why can’t I receive *Kami’s* blessing?” The Founder listened earnestly to Kiyō and truly sympathized with her.

He was able to do this because the Founder himself also underwent hardships in his younger days. I believe that the Founder saw his younger self in this lady, Ms. Kiyō Shiwaku, at that time. Until he “met” with the Divine Parent of the Universe, the Founder of the Konko Faith (*Konkokyo*) had practiced faith in *kamis* and *buddhas* (various deities conscientiously and sincerely but had not been able to receive divine blessings no matter how patiently he waited for them. To make the matter worse, the Founder in his younger days was not only unable to receive *Kami’s* blessings but he also was deeply miserable because he had lost one dear family member after another.

Recalling his own feelings back in those days, the Founder later wrote: "...I gave fervent requests and prayers to various kamis and did all I could. Even after I prayed to the kamis and buddhas, the victims were not saved. I stood by helplessly. I lived with this constant frustration and futility." (OG: 6-9-5) Because the Founder had gone through one enormous pain after another, just as he wrote them down by himself, he was truly able to empathize with Kiyō. He understood Kiyō, who could help but feel, "Why do I have to suffer, even though I have been praying to *Kami*/Deity so much?!"

Nevertheless, the Founder knew that understanding this lady's sadness was not enough. He knew that he would not be a successful Mediator unless he let worshippers awaken to *Kami*'s blessings. The Founder therefore spoke to Kiyō, "You say you are poor, but have you ever gone without a meal?" (GII: Shiwaku Kiyō, 2) This must have been a totally unexpected question for Ms. Shiwaku, and I believe that she nervously responded to the Founder's question, "No, I have never gone without a meal." (GII: Shiwaku Kiyō, 2) Then the Founder immediately said to Kiyō, "No matter how much money and material wealth you have, they are of no use if you cannot eat. Being able to eat cheap barley rice in good health is being a rich person." (GII: Shiwaku Kiyō, 2)

By using the words, "a rich person," the Founder convinced Kiyō that she was in fact "rich," even though she had initially thought she did not have money. In this way, through this Sacred Mediation she received, Kiyō was allowed to put herself in *Kami*'s blessings, even though she had been bogged in a swamp of suffering, her extreme poverty.

Objectively speaking, Kiyō's circumstance was not changed before and after her Sacred Mediation with the Founder; that is, the Mediation did not make her an overnight millionaire. How can we interpret the salvation Kiyō was allowed to enjoy via this Mediation?

What the Founder Wants to Tell us is...

When we have problems, we pray to *Kami*/Deity. We pray, for example, "I'm sick, so please cure my illness" or "I'm in need of money right now, so please help me get out of this financial trouble." In this way, we pray to *Kami* with all our might, so that our problems will be resolved as we expect, so that things will progress just the way we hope.

We receive blessings related to our problems from *Kami* in more ways than by praying this way. However, at that time, when Kiyō came and asked the Founder to perform Sacred Mediation for her, the Founder must have wanted to say to her: "I am sure that there is an important thing which you need to realize before you finally get to the very blessing you want."

Suppose Kiyō received Sacred Mediation from the Founder and she received money later, thanks to the divine virtue of the Founder. If Kiyō considers this positive outcome a blessing, then Kiyō's perception of divine blessings would not have changed at all. She would have still thought that before this blessing arrived to her, she was not blessed at all. The Founder had something he strongly wanted Kiyō to know. "Kiyō, you probably think that you are without blessings. But is it really true? Look, *Kami* is already giving you blessings. For instance, you have a blessing that allows you to be healthy enough to enjoy three meals a day. What you had been doing is asking *Kami* to give you blessings based on your prayer, without paying sufficient attention to a blessing you've already received. *Kami* will not be pleased with such behavior. Because *Kami* is not

happy, you will not be able to receive *Kami's* blessings quickly. I do not want to see you struggle. I advise you, therefore, to have a good understanding of the blessings that are already with you. I advise you to appreciate and cherish them. By learning to do this, you will become a happier, more grateful person. Also, by becoming such a person, you will soon get yourself ready to receive divine blessings that address your problems.”

This is what the Founder wanted to tell Kiyo, I believe. The Founder, too, “lived with this constant frustration and futility” until he became 42 years old. Until then, even the Founder was agonized and frustrated enough to say these words. *Kami*, however, had already bestowed a blessing upon the Founder through his tremendous suffering. The Founder was made to realize this truth through his own grave illness at the age of 42.

When the Founder was still going through years of suffering, *Kami* had the Founder’s relative die during the anniversary of another family member’s passing. By doing so, *Kami* tried so hard to make the Founder see the reason or cause of his family’s, the Akazawas, continuous grief. *Kami* had known beforehand that the Founder, at the age of 42, would succumb to a fever that would have been fatal to him. So, *Kami* changed the critical illness to a throat ailment. It was actually a blessing from *Kami* to the Founder. However, the Founder, along with his family members and relatives, was not able to see that he was already in a blessing because he and his dear family were totally preoccupied with the suffering that was surrounded him. Nevertheless, the Founder was informed later by *Kami* that “I was already in *Kami's* blessing at that time.” The Founder, because of this, wanted Ms. Kiyo Shiwaku to understand this important matter.

Kiyo, I believe, must also have said to herself, “Konko-*sama* (the Founder of the Konko Faith) is right. I used to feel for a long time that I was without *Kami's* blessings, but it was because I had only been focused on my poverty, and therefore I failed to see *Kami's* blessings. Now I see that I was wrong. Just as Konko-*sama* points out, it is obvious that *Kami* gave me many blessings while I was blindly thought that I was only totally immersed in a sea of problems.”

By being awakened to this, Kiyo transformed from a child of *Kami* in suffering into a child of *Kami* in divine blessings. I want to cherish this very fact about Ms. Shiwaku.

My Daughter’s Words that Awakened me

Now I introduce you to an episode that took place a few years ago. Someone close to me was transformed from a child of *Kami* in suffering into a child of *Kami* in divine blessings.

As usual, the annual National Center Test for University Admissions was administered in Japan the other day. A few years ago, my daughter took this test. Two nights before the National Center Test, as we ate dinner in our dining room, I mentioned to my daughter, “The entrance examination is just around the corner, so take good care of yourself, OK?” My daughter replied, “Yes, dad. I know it’s important.” After the dinner, I heard the door of my daughter’s room open. That sound was soon followed by the pained voice of my daughter. We heard our girl say, “Sorry, mom, I threw up,” and my wife and I hurried to her room. We saw our daughter cleaning her vomit with a towel, as she crouched in pain. Worried about our eighteen-year-old girl, we asked her, “What’s the matter with you? Are you all right?” “I suddenly felt very sick. I’m sorry I made my clothes dirty,” our daughter replied. “Oh, that’s OK. Don’t worry about it. Shall we go

to the bathroom now?" The young lady followed her parents' advice. She was in the bathroom for a while, but our daughter continued to feel nauseous. To make the matter even more serious, she began to have diarrhea and had a fever too.

Observing her condition, we, as her parents, were worried about our daughter very much. Obviously, she was worried about her own condition too. My wife and I exchanged words of anxiety: "Will our girl be healthy enough to take the Center Test tomorrow? Hopefully she is not infected with a norovirus. She hopefully does not have flu either." In those days, norovirus and influenza were rampant. We had another concern about our daughter. Until this event, she had never been late for school or absent from school and she had never left school early, either. Until that night, we, as her parents, had been supporting our daughter, who had a humble ambition to be awarded a prize of perfect attendance. That was the last goal she wanted to achieve as a senior high school student.

Our daughter lamented, "Can I go to school tomorrow?" To encourage her and probably myself too, I responded, "We must receive a blessing from *Kami* anyway. Let's pray to our Divine Parent together and then go to bed. Then everything will be all right." Although I said this, my daughter still had diarrhea, fever and an overall feeling of illness until midnight. Because of this, at several minutes past two in the morning on the following day, I decided to take my daughter to an emergency hospital. After being accepted at the reception desk of the hospital, my daughter lay on a sofa in the waiting room. I held her hand and my wife and I prayed to our Divine Parent, saying "Konko-sama, please take care of our daughter." Our little young lady also chanted, "Konko-sama, Konko-sama..." in a small, weak voice.

We were doing this for some time when our daughter said, "Dad?" I asked her, "Yes? Are you still feeling sick. Is any part of your body aching?" She then said: "Dad, I'm glad this happened tonight." When I heard her say this, I said to myself, "OK! She has just received a blessing from *Kami*." At the same time, I encouraged myself, silently saying, "All right, now I'm also going to receive *Kami's* blessing."

Our daughter had a simple physical examination, and she was prescribed an intravenous medication. I asked my wife to look after our daughter and I went back to our church. I knelt down and sat directly on the floor of the church altar for an earnest prayer to our Parent Deity. I did this in order to exhibit my utmost respect and humbleness to *Kami*.

"I worship You with utmost humility and awe through the founding minister of this Shizuoka church. Our church's founding minister conveys my prayer to the Head Minister of our Parent Church, Konko Church of Namba, who then conveys the prayer to *Konko-sama*, the Principal Mediator of the Konko Faith. *Konko-sama*, finally conveys my prayer to You. I thank You very much, Ikigami Konko Daijin-sama (Eternal Deity of Sacred Mediation) and Tenchi Kane No Kami-sama (Divine Parent of the Universe). Yui Iwasaki, a child of the Divine Parent born in a Year of the Dog, who belongs to Konko Daijin's *Hiromae* or Worship Hall in Shizuoka City, is now being treated at an emergency hospital due to the fever, diarrhea and nausea she has been suffering from since last evening. I thank You very much for this situation. As her parent, I was worrying about the National Center Test for University Admissions that will start tomorrow, because Yui is planning to take this entrance examination. I was also seriously wondering if she can maintain her perfect attendance in her school tomorrow. It was when I was in my deep anxiety about these things that Yui uttered the words, "I am glad." I thank You very much, our dear Founder

and our Divine Parent, for the fact that my daughter was able to find something positive under this severe circumstance. That was possible because Yui is blessed with inner, spiritual eyes as well as her physical eyes, I believe. Just as my daughter's words point out, I would like to thank You once again, because Yui is being cured by You through the treatments done by the doctors of the hospital. This is something I should be glad about. I know I should be glad about this, just as my daughter let me be aware of it, but if it is really the case, please make this happiness lead to a next joy. Please *do* allow Yui to go to school without any problems today. Please *do* allow her to take the National Center Test for University Admissions that will start tomorrow.

I would humbly like to add some more. "I, Michiyo Iwasaki, a child of the Divine Parent born in a Year of the Mouse, was unknowingly obsessed with my daughter's suffering because she looked to be in so much pain. I did chant Your name, *Konko-sama*, *Konko-sama*, but I wasn't really shaking hands with You. I was in fact shaking hands with a feeling of anxiety. I sincerely apologize to You about this. I was very preoccupied with my daughter's suffering, but her simple words of "I'm glad" woke me up. I thank You so very much because so many people and/or events often lead me to the right path, to true blessings. Not just this time around but also from now on too, please lead me, along with my daughter, so that we will receive divine blessings without fail, instead of getting lost. I appreciate Your guidance and instructions in advance."

People around one Also Become Children of the Divine Parent

The difference between "I am glad" and "I am troubled" is, in fact, the difference between "someone that finds himself in a divine blessing" and "someone that finds himself in a suffering." The thing that generates this difference is whether or not we see blessings of *Kami/Deity*. This speaks to the idea of whether or not "*Kami* is right there." When a person has a problem, he or she usually tends to be obsessed with that problem and say, "I'm troubled, I'm in big trouble." Why does this person tend to act like this? It is because he or she does not see *Kami*. This individual does not recognize the presence of *Kami*, which is why he or she suffers. We do not suffer because we come across problems. We pull ourselves down to a state of suffering because we do not have *Kami* in our sight. This is why we feel agonized and sad. We begin to see a ray of hope for salvation once *Kami* in our sight.

Right in the middle of a big trouble, Yui was able to say, "I'm glad." This means that my daughter saw *Kami* at that time. This is why she was soon led to the next blessing. If a person sees *Kami* in his/her sight, this person can cope with situations, feeling *Kami's* presence right from the start. Even if this individual may have some problems, he or she can start to handle the problems with *Kami*. My daughter, as a result, made a good use of her initial blessing of having been able to say "I'm glad this happened tonight" and got the next blessing to come to her.

Soon after the early morning prayer service was finished at our church, Yui came home from the hospital. A medical report informed my daughter that her illness was not the result of viral infections. She could go to school as long as she felt healthy. Thanks to the intravenous drips she took in the hospital, Yui recovered from nausea and diarrhea very quickly. Going to her room, daughter said, "I will take a nap until I really need to leave for school." She kept her own words and Yui literally slept until she was one moment before being late for school. My daughter was able to go to her school without trouble on that day. It was the day before the first of the two-day National Center Test for University Admissions, and school was over at noon. The students had three classes in the morning on that day, but those classes were in fact self-teaching

hours. Taking advantage of this precious opportunity, Yui was asleep with her head in her arms on her school desk all through the morning.

Coming home from school, my daughter went to see our neighborhood's primary doctor. He worked at a 100-year-old pediatric clinic in Shizuoka City, and this hospital for children had been run through three generations of the doctor's family. Just as usual, the doctor said, "You will be all right. I have a wonder medicine for you." He then gave her some pills, which my daughter took, and the next day, she was able to take the two-day National Center Test for University Admissions safely. Yui's words of "I'm glad it happened tonight" brought her a joy (blessing), and it brought about the next joy (blessing) for my daughter. This is how a child of *Kami* in suffering turned into a child of *Kami* in divine blessings.

In the midst of suffering, one directs his heart to *Kami*. He or she is then gradually able to recognize divine blessings in that problem. Considering those blessings from *Kami* as precious and worth thanking, and saying "I'm glad," a child of *Kami* who earlier places himself in suffering would instead place himself in *Kami's* blessings. This is how Ms. Kiyo Shiwaku and my daughter were reborn into children of *Kami* in a true sense.

I have one more important thing to mention regarding *Kami's* children: *Kami's* children in divine blessings have ability to turn people around them into children of *Kami* in divine blessings too. I was right beside Yui, my daughter, and I was saying "We are in trouble!" much more loudly than Yui. Yui was reborn into a child of *Kami* in divine blessings a little earlier than me, and my daughter uttered, "I'm glad (it happened tonight)." Her words woke me up spiritually and I was allowed to take notice of *Kami's* blessing, and I was made to be reborn. I am sure that a similar thing also happened in the home of Ms. Kiyo Shiwaku. Kiyo's being reborn promoted the salvation of her entire family soon afterwards.

It is said that if a family has one member who practices faith, the entire home will be saved. My understanding of a person with religious faith is that this is someone who recognizes *Kami's* blessings that are already there, someone who receives those blessings without fail and someone who becomes *Kami's* child in a true sense. If there is such a religious person in a home, this person can quickly find *Kami's* blessings no matter what events may happen in his or her home. This person is able to receive and embrace those divine blessings with respect and care. He or she can then use those blessings as a bridge to the next blessings. Therefore, *Kami's* blessings also reach out to other family members in this person's home. As a result, a state of true salvation arrives at this person's home, I believe.

Having A Parent-Child Relationship with *Kami*

The Founder of the Konko Faith teaches us, "People living between heaven and earth are *Kami's* children." (GIII: Konko Kyoso Gorikai 51) Even if *Kami* considers all people *Kami's* dear children, we, humans, will not successfully establish a parent-child relationship with *Kami* if we do not recognize the bond between *Kami* and us; that is, if we do not realize and accept *Kami's* love for us and workings of benevolence on us with a feeling of deep gratitude. This explains that we will find ourselves in a state of suffering because we are unable to have a parent-child relationship with *Kami*. In other words, we will soon get saved if we have a parent-child relationship with *Kami*.

In my view, to “practice faith” means to tread upon a spiritual path that leads us to the parent-child relationship with *Kami*. This is a path that will allow us to truly become *Kami*’s children. If we cherish *Kami*’s deep considerations and benevolent workings for us, trying to become *Kami*’s children in a true sense, “that will be faith.” I, therefore, consider it important for us to become aware of and respectfully receive *Kami*’s blessings that are already there for us. This is the very beginning for us to truly become *Kami*’s children.

Usually, we tend to think that we encounter problems and pray to *Kami*, saying “Konko-sama.” Then *Kami* hears our voice and looks back at us. This is our usual thought when we think of *Kami*. But allow me to tell you this is not true. It is, in fact, our misunderstanding. The truth is that when we pray and say “Konko-sama,” looking towards *Kami*, that is exactly when we find out that *Kami* has already had *Kami*’s eyes on us. If we are able to understand this, we have the chance to make ourselves people of (religious) faith. If we do not comprehend it, we won’t be people of faith. Please let me remind you; this is a BIG difference between being people of faith and not.

The Founder of the Konko Faith was gravely sick and totally bedridden at the age of 42. Feeling very sick in his bed, the Founder was made to listen to *Kami*’s words: “You knew that this year was going to be an unlucky year for you. Due to this, you went worshipping deities and buddhas at shrines and temples on New Year’s Day, making requests, didn’t you?” “You heard two groans made by the sacred kettle at the Kibitsu Shrine, didn’t you?” When the Founder heard *Kami* say these words, he must have thought, “Oh! *Kami* was always looking at me.” When the Founder realized (for the first time) that *Kami* was constantly looking upon him, and when he understood *Kami*’s true intentions with him (for the first time), that was the very time when *Kami* and the Founder met one another for the first time. *Kami* was waiting patiently for the Founder to become aware of what he should see. The moment when the Founder finally realized *Kami*’s glaze upon him (*Kami*’s true intentions and wishes for him), *Kami* became the Founder’s Parent Deity and the Founder became *Kami*’s beloved child. *Kami* and the Founder had a parent-child relationship in this way.

Walking upon the “Way of *Kami* and People”

We cannot live our lives without coming across problems. Our bodies and/or hearts can get sick. We may run into financial troubles. We have issues with others from time to time. We encounter various kinds of problems. When we are in trouble, we, believers of the Konko Faith, say “Konko-sama!” for help. Just by doing so, our eyes that were initially cast upon our problem become drawn towards *Kami*. When this happens, we are allowed to notice *Kami*’s workings that are already there. But sometimes, the problem we are facing is so grave and deep that we find it extremely difficult to recognize *Kami*’s workings, even though we earnestly chant, “Konko-sama!” In such an occasion, we should ask for Sacred Mediation, just as Ms. Kiyo Shiwaku did. Do you know why? Because Sacred Mediation has a function to teach us *Kami*’s blessings that are already there and hand them to us.

When we chant “Konko-sama,” ask for Sacred Mediation and direct our hearts to *Kami*, we will gradually see *Kami*’s workings that are already there for us. If we truly recognize and appreciate *Kami*’s workings, saying “I am glad,” we, children of *Kami* in suffering, get reborn into children of *Kami* in divine blessings. The reborn children of *Kami* then spread the state of salvation to the people around them.

These processes in faith can also be found in the slogan of the current Faith Movement of the Konko Faith (*Konkokyo*), "Let us Live a Mutually Fulfilled Life with *Kami*." In the midst of a difficult time, we chant "Konko-sama." We also ask for Sacred Mediation (when we deem it necessary). This thing is described on the first line of the Movement's slogan, which reads, "Let us seek and receive *Kami's* Words through Mediation." By doing these things, we will be allowed to awaken to *Kami's* blessings that are already there for us. This is shown in the next line, "Let us awaken to *Kami's* blessings and unconditional love." Then a sentiment of gratitude and joy emerges in our hearts, allowing us to say "I am glad." This is how we get turned into *Kami's* children in blessings. Our *kami*/god-like hearts will naturally get activated. This is where salvation arises, and this is the faith of Konko Daijin, our dear Founder. The current Fifth Konko-sama once referred to the "Way of *Kami* and People," as the faith of "Let us Live a Mutually Fulfilled Life with *Kami*" where we are encouraged to walk upon the "Way of *Kami* and People."

The *Kami*/god-like heart emerges from inside a child of *Kami* in blessings, and words and actions to save people will soon appear. *Kami* will be there. Together with all of you, I will seek faith which promotes all these wonderful things.

(THE END)