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Kami/God-Like Heart

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Manners of Today and *Kami*/God-Like Heart



On September 1, 2014, I was ordered to assume the position of the Director of Konko Tokyo Center. Since then, I have been serving our Divine Parent as the Director of the Center, praying to our Parent Deity and seeking our Divine Parent’s true wishes and/or intentions.

In the latter years of his life, the Founder of the Konko Faith imparted, “I also have desires. I have the desire to save people throughout the world.” (GII: Kondo Fujimori, 54) Whenever I work as the Center’s Director, I consider it important to re-appreciate this teaching of our Founder. However, I am forced to face my own limitations as a human being almost every single day. Too often, I am so weak that I cannot act with a *kami*/god-like heart. When I see my weakness, I see the laboriousness inside myself. I commute to Konko Tokyo Center by *Shinkansen* (*Shinkansen* stands for bullet or super-express train). It takes me about two hours to get to the JR Tokyo Station, and so I leave my church at 7:50 a.m. The other day, as I was waiting for my bullet train at the designated area of the platform, I saw a young couple who was waiting for their train but was standing at a wrong place. I knew where to wait for our train, so I spoke to the two young people, “Excuse me, but you seem to be standing at a wrong place. If you intend to get on the next train, you should be standing here, inside the green zone.” I did not speak to them in order to

receive their words of “Thank you very much!” But people usually will say “Thank you very much!” when someone is kind to them. The young man and woman, by the way, said nothing, walked past behind me and moved away to the direction of the front cars of the *Shinkansen* train.

Shortly after that, within my hearing, the young woman said to her boyfriend, “Do you have any idea why that middle-aged man spoke to me? It’s because I’m attractive!” Although she was not unattractive, but I couldn’t help sensing that the lady and her boyfriend didn’t even have even the minimum-level manners to say “Thank you” and to give a little bow to someone kind to them.

When I come across such impolite persons, I want to silently pray to our Divine Parent for them, “Konko-*sama*, please help them reform their attitude and the way they treat people. Please help them learn to live a good way of life as people and children of our Parent Deity.” But I cannot do this easily in reality. When I am in a local train, I occasionally see a passenger who leans on a doorway with his belongings on the floor by the doorway, I probably obstructing other passengers that want to get on or get off at each station. When I see such a person, I cannot but wonder “What on earth is this person thinking?”

The Konko Faith teaches us that “All people are *Kami*’s children” and that *Kami* or our Parent Deity has an ardent desire to save any kind of people. Do I always carry the same desire as *Kami*’s and act so that *Kami*’s desire will come true? The two episodes I have just shared with you say that I do not really do so in my daily life. This fact puts me in a dilemma between what *Kami* wants me to do and what I actually think, feel and do in reality. I know I have faith in our Divine Parent and I believe I practice faith in *Kami*. The problem is how am I supposed to deal with those manner-less, impolite and uncaring people? What am I supposed to pray to *Kami* for them? And how should I lead them so that they can get themselves closer to salvation? I am constantly in a deep thought on these things.

Being insulted, “You Bald-Headed!”

I was born into a local Konko church in Japan as the second youngest of four siblings. My father passed away when he was fifty-one years old. I took over for my father shortly after his passing, and I have been serving our Divine Parent in our church ever since. My father, who was born in 1926, was an extremely stern person. Because of this, I acted like my father when I was raising my children. My children often criticize me, “Dad, you are too severe. You are too strict with things.” They are probably right. I often feel that I cannot stand various kinds of people, many of whom are rude and/or heartless. I know I should see, hear, feel and act by following the teachings of our dear Founder, but I must admit that I seem to be deeply soaked in so-called common sense of our society much more often than I should.

Ms. Hide O'onishi, one of the Founder's Direct Disciples, passed on the following teaching of our Founder: Konko-Sama advised, "Don't keep a bad heart day after day. If someone speaks ill of you, don't bear a grudge against him." I remarked, "But if someone comes to me with a bad heart, I will also develop a bad heart." He answered, "Still, you must not have such a heart. Always keep a good heart." (GII: O'onishi Hide, 9) It seems to me that the Founder of the Konko Faith is encouraging us to express our *kami*/god-like heart in whatever situation we may be and train ourselves spiritually so that we will be able to live our life with a good, *kami*-like heart even if people mistreat us as badly as they can.

Even if I encounter people with bad attitude and behaviors, I, as a believer of the Konko Faith, am expected to pray to our Divine Parent for those people so that their hearts will be reformed and that they will be allowed to live their lives with a better way of life. However, reality is always much tougher than intention. When I actually come across people with bad attitude and behaviors, what I understand in my mind and what I feel in my heart do not always go together. I cannot put my spiritual knowledge into practice immediately, and I see frustrations and complaints in my heart instead.

The other day, I was on a subway train. I saw a young mother sitting on an edge of a long "silver seat" (seat for the elderly, the pregnant and/or the handicapped) very absorbed in her smart phone (cell phone) with her stroller right in front of a vacant area of the long "silver seat." Because of the stroller put right in front of the silver seat, elderly passengers just couldn't sit on it. I soon found it impossible to overlook the young lady and spoke to her. In my heart, I was half yelling to the woman, "How can you be so indifferent to other passengers? Are you nuts or what?" The words I actually gave her were "Lady, may I have a second with you? Since an elderly person is near you, could you please put aside your stroller?" The young mother put aside her baby carriage a little bit in total silence. Soon after that, she whispered, "It's none of your business, you bald-head!" Her voice was so small that it was barely audible, but my ears caught her words fortunately or unfortunately. I go through "mud" like this from time to time and I am still supposed to try to pray for, help and lead people with a *kami*/god-like heart. Am I ever fulfilling this task *Kami*/God entrusts to me? Well, I am not very confident. If not, then why not? What is missing from my faith in our Parent Deity? Why on earth do I get angry when this sort of things happens to me? In this way, I asked myself one question after another when I undergo such a frustrating thing.

Heaven Is Father, Earth Is Mother

I have been working as a prison chaplain for about four years and I visit a reformatory every month. As a part of correctional education, religious lectures are incorporated into the curriculum of the reformatory.

I am responsible for two things when I visit the juvenile reformatory once a month: to give a lecture on the teachings of my religion (*Konkokyo* or the Konko Faith) to the young prisoners at their dormitory and to have a private interview with two youths (one person at a time) until they are released from the detention center. As for the religious lecture, there is a certain theme for each month, so I prepare and deliver a lecture about *Konkokyo*, making sure that my speech will go with the monthly theme the reformatory provides. Through doing this important task, there is one thing I have noticed about the youths detained in the reformatory.

Private talks are prohibited in a reformatory. In their day-to-day life in the detention facility, the youths cannot express their feelings openly and freely. Because of this facility regulation, these boys and girls gush out words all of a sudden once their private interview with me starts. They say, for example, “I had been this way all the time until I was finally put into this detention place” and “I was raised by such bad parents, and...” No matter how much time may pass, the opportunity to interact still seems to be inadequate for these youths. Their stories don’t really seem to end. Once they open up their mouths, they never stop. I listen to them patiently until they finally finish telling me their stories. When I listen to the young detainees, I often think, “Oh, dear... Things must have been very rough to this kid. I cannot but sympathize with him, because he has just told me what a terrible environment he had to grow up in.” What strikes me is that those children in prison talk about their mothers particularly often. These children frequently say to me, for instance, “My mother abused me in various ways.” If I were abused by my mother, I would be too angry to call her “my mother” in a polite manner. But they all call their mothers “my mother,” “mom” or “mommy.” They never call their mothers “ma” or “(dirty) old woman.”

Why do these youngsters refer to their mothers as “my mother” that sounds more polite and affectionate than I think they could make it sound? The Founder of the Konko Faith teaches us, “Heaven is father and Earth is mother.” (GI: Ishihara Ginzo, 1) Just as the Earth/Ground embraces all of us without exception, “I wanna be embraced by my mom!” seems to be their keen, undeniable desire.

Please allow me to repeat myself here. Fantasy may kiss you softly but reality often bites you. These imprisoned kids wanted their mothers to hold them tightly and give them maternal affection. But these things had never happened up to the time they were put in juvenile jail. Youngsters at the age of 17 or 18, who have never felt, “I am so happy to have been born into this world,” are taken into prison. These children without maternal affection from their mothers have pain in their respective daily lives. They desperately want to feel happiness and thankfulness of being in this world. There is pain coming from being abused by their mothers in the hearts of those children. In their hearts, there is also pain that comes from a serious lack of happiness and appreciation. This is what these youths express to me the most.

If you commit a crime, you must be responsible for it. You cannot ask someone else to be responsible for your own crimes. According to the laws and regulations in our society today, you must compensate for your wrongdoings. I, therefore, need to understand the inner pain of those imprisoned youths and stand by them as closely as possible as a religious leader. I am also compelled to consider how I should perceive and share their pain with them, and I hope that this effort will be my regular commitment of spirituality.

Ms. Shige Okamoto, one of the Founder's Direct Disciples, passed on the following teaching of our Founder: There was a straw hedge around Konko-Sama's house, but it was set afire maliciously. A follower who noticed the partially burnt hedge said, "Konko-Sama, you should curse the person who did this." Konko-Sama replied, "I must pray for those who do such things, so they will reform their hearts." (GII: Okamoto Shige, 2)

Here, the reaction of "a follower" to "the person who did this" and that of the Founder to the individual are obviously different from one another, and it seems to me that it's because this follower and the Founder were paying attention to two different things at that time: The Founder was looking deeply into the pain and weakness one cannot but have, as one lives his life, while the follower minded the individual's wrongdoing itself only. The Founder had a deep understanding of the concept that human beings inevitably tend to conceive negative feelings such as hatred, sorrow, anger and jealousy as they live their lives and that these sentiments can lead them to suffering more often than not. This is probably why the Founder gave Ms. Shige Okamoto the teaching quoted earlier.

Having the same or at least a similar heart and attitude of our Founder, I lived my everyday life and visited the reformatory regularly. Then my heart came to change little by little.

Listening First, Speaking Later

Our Divine Parent revealed the following message to the Founder on October 15, 1874: "Write the memoirs of Konko Daijin (the *Oboegaki*), who has established a hiromae here. Write about the time you were born, what your parents told you, the events after you joined this family, and other recollections. Write about the fears you had regarding Konjin and the Directions, the apologies you made for your irreverences, and your practicing of faith in various kamis." (OG: 22-10, 1-2)

In 1873, the Founder of the Konko Faith received *Tenchi Kakitsuke* or the Divine Reminder from the Divine Parent of the Universe. In the same year, the Founder was instructed by the Divine Parent about to which direction he was supposed to sit when he conducted Sacred Mediation between the Parent Deity and

worshippers. He also took a bath for the first time in 10 years in that year, and was told to consider himself a “one-year-old person born in the Year of the Rooster” by the Divine Parent. According to my personal interpretation, the development of the Founder’s faith in the Divine Parent of the Universe reached its peak at that time.

In the next year, 1874, the Founder received the above-quoted message from the Divine Parent. In this divine message, “the apologies you made for your irreverences” is written in the past tense. “(And) your practicing of faith in various kamis” refers to an event in the past too. While the Founder teaches us, “You need not consult the Days and Directions” (GIII: Konko Kyoso Gorikai, 65) “Things will be all right as long as you never fail to apologize for the irreverences that you have made unknowingly,…” (based upon GIII: Jinkyukyogoroku 99) he wrote “...the fears you had regarding Konjin and the Directions” in the present tense in the original Japanese language. This fact contains a significant meaning, I believe. The phrase, “the fears you had regarding Konjin and the Directions,” helps us remember that we still commit irreverence against our Divine Parent as humans. This phrase also encourages us to turn the pain and weakness we cannot help but feel in our lives into our joy by practicing faith in our Divine Parent. I understand and interpret that using this expression, the Founder encourages us to develop our *kami*/god-like heart without rushing and turn our negative feelings and/or thoughts into our joy that we are so much thankful and fortunate that we were born into this world.

Since the Founder teaches us not to forget the pain we went through in the past, we shouldn’t put ourselves in a situation where “We pray no more once we find ourselves on the shore.” We need to work hard so that we won’t let the blessings we received from our Parent Deity go down the drain. If we successfully work on this, we will fully be able to appreciate the meaning of “...Kami (God) will never let you have an experience which has no meaning.” (GIII: Jinkyukyogoroku 12)

I believe that our Parent Deity bestows *kami*/god-like heart upon all people. Keeping this in our minds, we need to have a firm resolution and wish, “Our dear Divine Parent, please let my *kami*/god-like heart give me a way of life that is useful to the people around me.”

Ms. Sugi Ogihara received the following teaching from the Founder: “...Don’t ever forget the longtime pain you have suffered and the divine blessings you have received. As long as you don’t forget these two things, your illness won’t recur. Hereafter, when people come to you in pain, give prayers for them while recalling your own suffering and the divine blessings you have received. If you don’t care about others because you yourself are already cured, your illness will return. Keep receiving divine blessings with the heart you have now, then your illness won’t recur, and future generations of your family will also receive blessings.” (GI: Ogihara Sugi 6, 5-7)

This teaching concretely describes what our *kami*/god-like heart is really like, I believe. What's important for each of us is to feel the pain in our respective lives, face our weakness as humans, practice faith in our Divine Parent and ask for and receive Konko-*sama*'s Sacred Mediation. If we forget our happiness regarding the blessings we received from our Parent Deity and the sufferings we had had until we were blessed, we will probably fail to help people be saved by our Divine Parent.

As for me, when a newcomer comes over to my (Konko) church, I listen to the new person's stories, strongly presuming that this person is in a lot of pain now. As I practice faith, I try to follow the wish of our Parent Deity and the Founder. We can find the following statements in the "Aim" section of the current Faith Movement of the Konko Faith, "Let us Live a Mutually Fulfilled Life With Kami": "Let us ask for and receive Sacred Mediation," "Let us pray for, help and lead others, getting our *kami*/god-like heart to function." The point is, whether or not we are ready to follow these statements. Putting these words into practice, if I may say so, is the true worth of practicing faith.

When we try to put the words in the above-mentioned Faith Movement into practice, we are not given one specific way to do so. The important thing is that we want to fill ourselves with a *kami*/god-like heart and that we want to become persons who volunteer to pray for others. It seems to me that we can become people who are capable of helping and leading others with a *kami*/god-like heart if we constantly try to listen to and humbly speak to people around us, instead of being eager to lead them.

I myself tried to become such a person for a while, and a wonderful event happened to me the other day.

The Start of A Refreshing Day

On that day, I had pain in the left knee and I decided to ride an elevator from the platform of a subway station on the basement floor to the ticket gate on the ground floor. A young mother was with her baby child in a stroller, and she stood before the elevator just as I did. Another young lady who appeared to be a university student, being a bit over twenty years old, joined us to wait for the elevator to come down to us. Those young ladies stood a little behind me, and I entered the elevator first when its door opened. As soon as I was inside, I pressed the "OPEN" button and spoke to the two ladies from inside,

"Please come in." Then the young mother with the baby said, "Thank you very much" and came in. Another young lady followed her. The elevator rose up. When the door opened again, I spoke to the two ladies again, "Please get off first." The young mother smiled and said "Thank you very much." I then talked to another lady, "Please go ahead and get off, Mademoiselle."

After a short while, an elderly lady, who looked a little over 80 years old, passed through the ticket gate and came over to the elevator. The old lady dragged her right leg as she walked. I sensed that she wanted to ride the elevator and held its door in order not for it to get closed. I spoke to the old woman, "Please go inside the elevator. No worry is necessary, for I am holding its door now." Then the elderly lady said to me, "Oh, I appreciate your kindness, darling." At that time, I was very and grateful to have such a refreshing morning. I thought that our Divine Parent made me appreciate the precious value of being grateful once again by sending that old woman to me.

As I let go the elevator door and was slowly walking away, the elderly lady waved her hand to me. "Thank you, ma'am," I said, looking back at her. I looked ahead again and walked towards the ticket gate. Then I noticed that the young mother and another young lady around 20 years old had been seeing my action. The young mother with her baby put a sparkling smile on her face and bowed to me. The lady who looked like a college student in her early twenties also smiled and bowed. On that day, in Konko Tokyo Center, my workplace, I was able to get jobs done more efficiently and precisely than usual. When/If we successfully treat people with a *kami*/god-like heart, *Kami*/God/our Parent Deity will work for us and *Kami*'s sacred workings will be shown. And we will all be happy and fulfilled.

We don't really need to force ourselves to "bring someone to our Konko church" and/or to "pass on our faith to people around us." Instead, we can humbly pray to our Divine Parent, "Please allow me to practice faith with people around me." We can simply yet sincerely listen to what people want to/need to tell us. We can pray to our Parent Deity, "Please allow me to let people around me know what I've learned and experienced spiritually up to now." These efforts will surely allow us to convey our precious assets of spirituality to a lot of people, I believe. If this really comes true, our faith in our Divine Parent will contribute to world peace and the salvation of humanity.

(THE END)