

Chuichi Fukaya — Opening Words: “No Discrimination Between Female Pine and Male Pine”

Late last year, Korea saw the election of a female president, Park Geun-hye. Throughout the world, there has been a gradual increase in the number of women who have become key figures in not only in politics but also in the corporate world, serving as executives for private companies. However, in Japan, women leaders in politics and in private sector are still extremely rare. According to the gender equality index published by the World Economic Forum last year, Japan ranked very low, at 101st among 135 countries. As a historical background for the inability for Japan to nurture women leaders, it can be pointed out that women’s activities have been pigeonholed into the category of women’s association, something that the government encouraged in the late Meiji and Taisho period as a way to offset any threat from women liberation movements. On the other hand, there are Divine Directions in the late Meiji that are directly tied to the establishment of the Tenrikyo Women’s Association. In these directions, we find the proactive reasons for the founding of the Women’s Association, as a way to unearth the women’s abilities that had been buried and to have them carry the same responsibilities as men. Now and in the future, we need to place women in the core of organizational leadership in both the religious and educational world and make progress to change the world through new perspectives.

Harumichi Fukagawa — Historical Resources of Tenrikyo Overseas Mission (37) Historical Resources of the Manchurian Mission [21]

In December of 1945, as the cold weather became severe, Yoshihara for some reason became concerned with his second daughter. He began to miss her and began to see her in his dreams. Then, on December 12, suddenly, he was told to go home, taking a freight train that would be leaving for Harbin from a place near the barracks at Mudanjiang on the next morning, and thus was kicked out of the camp with a few dozen others. This took place at a time when Japanese prisoners were being shipped to the USSR together with material goods. Why were twenty or so prisoners freed? Strange but true things did happen. And his release from Mudanjiang was a beginning of a series of miraculous events, leading to this return to the fellowship in Dalian. However, precisely at the time when he was released from the camp on December 12, his second daughter had passed away for rebirth.

Ichiro Soda — Histories of the Tenrikyo Mission (15) Tenrikyo in Okayama, Hiroshima, and Yamaguchi

The three prefectures of Okayama, Hiroshima, and Yamaguchi each have about 370 churches. This is not a coincidence. The number of churches per population of ten thousand, among the three prefectures, is completely different, ranging from Okayama at 19.47, Hiroshima at 13.2, to Yamaguchi at 25.66. Why are there lots of churches in Yamaguchi while very few in Hiroshima? There may be various issues involved in this question.

Towards the end of 1896, Okayama and Yamaguchi each had about 40 churches while Hiroshima had only half of that, at 20 churches. We can see the difference in number at the early stage of the mission. Most likely, the Jodo Pure Land sect was very strong in the Aki region in Hiroshima, and its presence functioned as an obstacle to new religions such as Tenrikyo.

From where did Tenrikyo enter these three prefectures? First, for Okayama, the mission came from Osaka, Hyogo, and Nara. Churches such Kasaoka, Okayama, and Tamashima were the results. As for Hiroshima, there are many from Okayama and Osaka. These became the churches affiliated with Kasaoka, Kita, and Chuka. Many of the churches in Yamaguchi originate from Tokushima Prefecture, and these comprise close to half of the churches in Yamaguchi. These became the Shuto and Hofu Grand Churches.

Koji Fukaya — A Growth of Faith through Ofudesaki (11) Part 2: 13-47

Verses 13 to 17 and God’s encouragement to “ponder over everything from your innermost heart” (2:15) suggest that the phrase “go forth into the open” (*omote-ni-deru*) in verse 13 does not mean the act of spreading the teachings as merely a piece of information. Rather, these verses teach us that the messenger’s mind and heart are most important. The same is equally true of those to whom the messages are imparted.

However, at the same time, it may not be only a issue pertaining to the mind and heart but also a physical issue, to “go forth into the open,” when we read that God refers to the special places called “*Uchiwake-basho*” where God’s truth is conveyed (2:16). If we read the Ofudesaki carefully, we find that God the Parent encourages people to live a joyous life in both mentally and physically ways.

In a series of verse beginning in verse 25, in the theme of the pond in the high mountains, Ofudesaki shows a process to purify the muddy heart by listening to the teachings. Also, what Ofudesaki teaches in the theme of *Kara* and *Nihon* is the generative order in the creation of human beings. The fact that people confuse that order leads God to have anger (2: 32).

Hisayo Tanaka — Japanese Language Education for Japanese Children Growing Up in France (3) Approach to Japanese Language Classes for Children at the Tenri Franco-Japanese Cultural Association [3]

Setting aside issues regarding textbooks and the making of educational resources, the instructor’s greatest concern was how to quiet the children who would become restless during class and have them focus on the lessons. Their anxiety was centered on discipline issues. It would require time for the instructors to determine the cause of such disruption, whether it lies in lack of the teacher’s teachings skills, the children’s comprehension capacities, or their developmental stage. In either case, homeroom instructors burdened with many children who presented discipline issues were in a severely challenging situation, both physically and emotionally. Their lesson began with presenting the children with a promise, based on the principles of the school, regarding the learning of the Japanese language, and consistently asking the children to understand and follow its terms. Such steadfast manner of engaging the children, together with a sustained effort of demonstrating the instructor’s commitment to education, enabled a trusting relationship between the instructor and the children as well as with the parents. Such bond would lead naturally to a change in attitude among the children towards the study of the Japanese language.

Midori Horiuchi — Connecting “Life”: The Phenomenon of Life and Death (15) How Did We Reflect on Death [6]

In Buddhism, death and life are thought to be in a state of harmonious unity. Therefore, life is accompanied by death. To live already implies that one is aging, will become sick, and thus to die; therefore, the fundamental source of suffering in life, which are aging, illness, and death, are thought to be one. Also, we perceive a sense of suffering when things do not go as we want; but instead of regarding such condition as suffering, if we are able to accept that unwanted consequences are the truth of our existence, then, there is possibility for liberation from suffering. This is taught as a religious response to the act of living. Also, while lay followers in Buddhism are given the admonition to “not kill,” this admonition is extended to not taking the life of beings other than human beings as well. This is a distinct feature of Buddhism. In such case, given this admonition, how does Buddhism preach about suicide?

Saburo Yagi — The Path Towards Normalization (13) Barrier-free and Urban Design

Barrier-free refers to policies that seek to remove barriers—such as physical barriers that interfere with daily life of people with disabilities as they seek to live their everyday lives as well as mental barriers in people’s minds—and the conditions in which such barriers have been removed.

However, although they may seek to live normal lives, there still exist numerous difficulties and barriers for people with disabilities. Especially in a society that emphasizes “standards and averages,” people with disabilities are burdened with a great social disadvantage. And these are regarded as problems of the people with disabilities and as individual problems. Thus, it is rare to see these issues addressed.

The goals of urban design are “to create a society in which everyone can participate.” For such reason, it is critical to eliminate barriers that exist in society, including “physical barriers,” “legal and institutional barriers,” “cultural and information-access barriers,” and “mental barriers” directed against people with disabilities.

Takanori Sato — The Unexpected Effects the Radiation Leak Accident at the Fukushima No. 1 Plant (6) The Difficulties in Decontamination Work, As Seen in Negligent Work of the Contractors

On January 4, 2013, the Asahi Newspaper published its front page with headlines reading “Numerous Negligence in Decontamination,” “Contaminated Soil from Areas Surrounding Fukushima No. 1 Thrown into River,” “Investigation by Ministry of the Environment.” These front page articles, immediately after the beginning of the New Year, garnered large attention from the public. In particular, for the people who live in the decontamination zone as well as the mountains nearby, the news must have been a shocking one. Last summer, the Ministry of the Environment designated eleven municipalities as “Special Decontamination Zone,” and began the decontamination efforts in the residential areas as well as roads and farmland. Among them, four municipalities contracted the decontamination efforts to joint ventures (JV) of several general contractor firms. While their pricing was not cheap, the recent news exposed the negligent and corner-cutting procedures done under these contracts. Unless the decontamination work makes rapid progress, there is concern that the discrimination against the disaster victims of Tohoku will only increase. As Japanese who experienced the nuclear plant accident, we need to undertake these efforts with a sense of “shared emotion and shared suffering” together with the people of the disaster areas.