

Shoyo Sensei's Dharma Message

Swimming Pool "Politics"

From six o'clock in the morning, I swim five or six days a week for twenty laps in Alameda at the Lincoln Pool. It is just five minutes away from the Alameda Buddhist Temple where we live. It is an outside pool with lukewarm water. Besides swimming, I enjoy the shining stars and moon, beautiful green magnolia trees, winds and even rains. Sometimes, I can even rescue small bugs accidentally fell into the water. I swim for about 45 minutes and am a slow lap swimmer. The morning lap swim mates are all good friends of mine. But, sometimes, things happen. We live in the world of greed and attachment.

The pool has four lanes. It is my idea that theoretically, twelve people can swim if we share the lane, three can swim in one lane. We naturally and usually share the lane, but, not always. We all know that Don thinks that the first lane is "his." He wants to swim alone. When someone asks him to share the lane, he declines. When some one new who does not know about Don jumps into "his" lane without asking him, he stops swimming and goes home. He is 86 years old and I know that he needs to protect himself from other wild swimmers.

Many have their favorite lane. Thus, the first thing we do is to put our own staffs on our favorite lane or on an empty lane. Those staffs are fins, swim boards, goggles, buoy, etc. They are useful tools for those who use them. They are a "voiceless" disclaimer, "This is my lane."

One morning, when the fourth lane was half empty, Jane came with her husband, Rick. She used to swim often before, but she became too busy to swim because of her pregnancy followed by their new baby. That morning, I was glad to see her. She said their eldest one became twelve years old and can watch the baby, so she can swim. Jane and Rick don't use any tools when they swim, like me, so they directly went into the shower rooms to change. Later, Monica came in. She immediately put her fins, swimming board and buoy at the fourth lane. Then, Rick came out of the shower room, and saw the stuffs on the lane. But, he began to swim there, since he came earlier than the person who placed them. I told Jane to join me. Then, Monica came out of the shower room. She is known for her rudeness. While I was swimming, something must have happened: Rick jumped out of the pool. Monica must have chastised him, saying, "This is MY lane." I felt sorry for him. I told him, "Rick, come here. I am done." I actually had four more laps to go, but I didn't say that. Then, Don in the first lane said, "I'm done." "Thank you!" I said and completed my twenty laps. Rick joined his wife, Jane. By this way, we all enjoyed the morning lap swimming.

The main root of our suffering (*dukkha*) is "being selfish." Suffering arises entwined with the notion of "I." Thinking in terms of "I" is "I-making" (*ahamkara*). This, "I-making" creates the sense of "my," "mine," which is "mine'-making" (*mamamkara*). As long as we think in terms of "I," "my," "mine," "you," "your," "yours," etc., there is selfishness. We go through this process of "I'-making" and conceive of "self" as the very center of the world.

Whom do you see first when you look at the pictures that you know that you are included in? I look at me first. Though it is not unethical, wrong, bad or sinful to do so. But, the Buddha taught that in this simple action is the very seed of becoming selfish. And it results in suffering and stress.

Alas, the first thing I do when I come to the pool side is to place "my" swimming cap on "my" favorite lane to claim that this is "my" lane. Thank you, Monica, for making me aware that I am selfish.

Namu Amida Butsu

Shaku Shoyo

Mrs. Keiko Okubo's Corner

Attitude

The Longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude is more important than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one thing we have, and that is our attitude...

(Shared by Mrs. Keiko Okubo)

Dr. Walter's Health Corner

Microwave Cooking:

Question:

Cooking in the microwave causes food to lose nutrients, right?

Answer:

Wrong. Microwaved food may retain vitamins BETTER than stovetop-cooked food. That's because the microwave zaps it quickly and without much water. One study found that spinach retained only 77 percent of the B-vitamin folate when cooked on a stove – but ALL of its folate when cooked in a microwave.

Top 5 Seeds and Nuts to Lower Cholesterol:

1. Sunflower seeds
2. Pistachios
3. Pumpkin seeds
4. Pine nuts
5. Flaxseeds, whole

(from Consumer Reports on Health)