

Shoyo Sensei's Dharma Message

Buddhist Practice at the Pool Side

One morning, it was only Richard and I who were swimming at around 6:45. Soon, both of us got out of the water and went into the shower rooms respectively. My shower is very quick. But he is very slow, slow in everything: swimming, walking and taking a shower. He is 84 years old.

A few years ago, while he was taking shower, he had a heart attack. Very fortunately, John was in the shower room. He called emergency right away and Richard was saved. What if John was not there? Even thinking only was terrible.

Coming out of the shower room, I sat on a chair to wait for him. With warm feelings, I looked at the still water in the pool, enjoying the beauty of dark green magnolia trees, and listening to birds singing.

Five minutes, then ten minutes passed. Slowly, various thoughts arose in my mind: "Several swimmers come around this time every morning. What happened today? No one comes. How come?" "Yesterday, Bob was saying that he will have an operation on his shoulder soon. Bob, 83 years old, and Richard take a shower almost at the same time. So, I did not worry about them. But, now if Bob cannot come for a while, do I have to wait for Richard like this morning?"

Twenty minutes passed. Another thoughts arose: "I have my own schedule to work. I have to go home and do my own things. Which is more important, Richard's safety or my schedule?"

My gentle feeling of Metta (loving-kindness) began to shake and shrink. I was amazed to watch these thoughts. With extreme quickness, my mind moved from one thought to another. Then, another thought came: "Why not relax and enjoy Metta more, forgetting all these thoughts?" I slowly moved my eyes upon the surface of calm water in the pool.

Soon, he slowly walked out from the shower room. Finding me sitting on a chair, he was surprised. Then, he said "Thank you!" for 4 or 5 times looking at me. Then he happily asked me, "How many years ago was it that you kindly visited me at the hospital when I had a heart attack?" I thought I was happier than he himself.

But, indeed, my action is nothing to be proud of. The fact that I had various questions and doubts come into my mind was abnormal. It is a natural action as a human being. Shinran Shonin taught it as "naturalness." "That is the way it is." I became even happier, then.

This morning, the situation became exactly the same. Without any thinking, I waited for Richard. How quickly passed 25 minutes!