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Hello, everyone! How are you doing?

Full-fledged summer has finally arrived.

COVID 19, which shook the world, is finally subsiding, and the World Health Organization (WHO) recently announced the end of the state of emergency.

Although the infectious disease has not yet been completely eradicated, there are bright signs that we can return to our daily lives if we continue to take precautions. How will this human experience, which has claimed so many victims and the efforts of entire nations, be recorded in the history of the world in the future?

In our daily lives as well, I believe we had a variety of experiences that have forced us to change and learn many new things. For example, washing our hands with soap after returning from outside as a precaution against infection has been so ingrained in our minds that it has become a habit. We even feel uncomfortable unless we do so.

Come to think of it, however, I realize that this is what it means to acquire a habit.

In Buddhism, it is called "precepts" (sila). It means "to acquire good habits" and is not something that is ordered or forced upon us by others, but rather it is considered a voluntary effort.

However, it is a fact that if one does not acquire these skills, he or she will tend to think of skipping work today or thinking that it is too much trouble. Therefore, conscious effort is always necessary to become a habit.

President Nichiko Niwano introduced a poem that fits this description perfectly.

I wake up in the morning and put on my clothes
Shivering because it is cold.
When I wake up in the morning, I put on my clothes
Shivering because it feels cold.
This is too troublesome!
Wouldn't it be better to keep my clothes on all the time?

Today, I cleaned the classroom
Even gathered the eraser shavings together.
Today, I will clean the classroom again
Wiping every inch of the room with a cloth.
This is too troublesome!
Wouldn't it be better to do it only once a week?

Repeat, repeat,
Repeat the same thing day after day,
Repetition of similar things.

Let me repeat wholeheartedly!
Let me repeat until it becomes fun!
Let me repeat until I change myself!!!

Until I acquired the habit of washing my hands with soap immediately upon returning from outside, I did it because I anxiously wanted to escape the COVID infection. However, once it became the norm, it is interesting how not doing so felt so unnatural that it even bothered me.

It is only through repetition that practice of "good deeds," such as morning and evening recitations, greeting others, and showing concern for others, become a part of one's own mind and body.

Great Bodhisattva Nichiren taught that in practicing the Lotus Sutra, it is important to read the Lotus Sutra with one's eyes and recite it with one's mouth, but the crucial point is to make it one's own through one's body (through practice).

Firstly, through repeated practice with others, one will naturally develop experiences of growing within oneself. Wouldn't that give rise to the "virtues" one cannot see that will gradually make one shine brightly?

I believe this is what leads to deep faith that is different from mere study.

I hope that all of you will not be defeated by the summer heat, be able to devote yourselves tirelessly, and while encouraging one another, have fulfilling lives together with the members of the Sangha.



Gassho

Rev. Tomokazu
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