

The 2nd Essay under the theme — What do I expect of English Education in Japan?

Ask, and it shall be given you.

(Matthew 7, The New Testament)

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Prologue

Miraculously, at the age of over seventy I had a job to serve as a kind of official guide for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics to exhibit the Olympic, Paralympic Flags and the torch used for the Rio Olympics in 2016 on the second floor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Twin Tower Buildings, which were designed by the then worldly-known Kenzo Tange, who also had designed the 1964 Tokyo Olympic swimming pool, where I worked as one of the youngest official interpreters of English for the Tokyo Olympic Organizing Committee in 1964.

At the age of seventy-one I retired from a post as a part-time teacher of English at Tokyo Denki University following the one at Wayo Women's University a year earlier. This new job was in continuity with my last teaching job at universities.

I looked for a job with my multi-lingual skills. There was nothing. I decided to go to an unemployment office 'Hello Work' human resource center. There did not seem to be any job to use my language skills. One security company started recruiting one for the Olympic-related exhibit on the same day. I was right on the spot and out of about twenty applicants I was recruited luckily because I was just there.

The company was a successful bidder for the job. It was a first-time trial for the medium-sized security company to recruit someone who could speak English. Ask, and it shall be given you. I was assigned this job luckily and worked till the end of May, that year. Let me reflect on my experience then.

April 20, 2017 — I had been told to come to the company near the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office at west-Shinjyuku in the center of Tokyo. I was the first one to apply. They valued my linguistic abilities and accepted me. *Gei wa mio tasuku* in Japanese can literally mean "Skills may help one when necessary. *"Aide-toi, le Ciel t'aidera"* in French, which is "God helps those who help

As of November 30, 2020

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themselves.”

April 25 — I left my house early in the morning for the bus stop fifteen minutes away. The nearer bus stop does not have an early bus service. My wife was taking care of our young granddaughters in Osaka, so I was living alone at Ichikawa, where the River Edo separates between Tokyo and Chiba Prefecture. The earliest bus comes at 4:46 in the morning. I got on the bus to go to the Japan Railway Ichikawa Station. The local train takes me to Shinjyuku in fifty minutes without my changing trains. My predecessor, Mr. Watanabe (assumed name), was waiting for me at 7:30 a.m. in front of the entrance of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

It was the first day to work at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office and I was a trainee guard. As many as seventeen poles needed to be set up properly. I was told fifty percent of my work was that of a security guard and the rest was guiding about the Olympic and Paralympic exhibits. The Olympic, the Paralympic flags and the Rio Olympic torch were in acrylic cases. They have to be protected until the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 later postponed till 2021. Young kids suddenly hit the acrylic cases with a bang. Senior high school kids talk to each other, brandishing their school bags near the cases.

Anyone can come and stay. There are many kinds of people. A middle-aged woman comes to this building almost every day and sits on one seat from morning till evening. Later another guard from another security company said to me, “In summer she sticks out her bottom and scratches itchy parts.” One day I said to her, “Why not go to the nearby library in the Central Park next to the tower on some days?” She heard nothing, ignoring my request and kept on coming, changing seats. During my thirty day work one or two foreigners could have caused terrorist attacks. No matter how prudent I was, nothing could be done well enough. The Metropolitan Government needs to be on alert every day. One day a right-wing propaganda truck came and stopped in front of its main entrance, soon to follow with high-sounding old Japanese war songs or so. I stood in front of them and guided them to move to the left not to be in the way for coming executives and officers. During the closure at the office before eight o’clock no guard is stationed at eight o’clock. It was a role of mine to take and my first experience. I was a little scared, feeling I might be shot with a pistol. My father worked as an MP and a photo of his shows he was on guard at the entrance of the Army Office at Yotsuya in the center of Tokyo during World War II, where Sugiyama, the army general, worked.

Mr. Watanabe told me how to greet Ms. Koike, the Governor, and directors-general every morning. A timely eye-to-eye contact was not easy to do. Some directors greeted me. Some others kept their faces down without looking at me. Still others did not come near me because they worked at different areas. Mr. Watanabe said, “When you see sightseers, you do not need to greet them.” (Remember beefeaters in Great Britain.) On the same day he received a call to go to Hachioji to the west of Tokyo for his suddenly requested work. I was left alone. At 18:45 I turned off the TV monitor, pulled down the curtains to cover acrylic cases, returned poles to the original laying positions. I left the government office after 19:00. I kept on standing all day long. Going to the office, coming back, often standing on the bus to the JR station in the morning and in the evening continued for thirty days. I often kept on standing for 16 hours a day.

April 26 — Unlike before I left my house, received an early morning phone call from my office to

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confirm I was already at the JR station at 06:00 a.m. I must be on guard (do *kyoban* in Japanese) at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Office before 07:30 a.m. (I newly knew the Japanese word *Jyoban*, which is a military term meaning 'to be on guard.')

The job required me to work on Saturdays and Sundays, too. I woke up at 03:30 a.m., which was not hard at all for an elderly like me. I came back home late in the evening. The shutters of my house had to be closed all this time. I had forty-five minute lunch time break each day. The general affairs section manager or another person came to take place of me.

April 27—While doing the job, I knew this was a place for many foreign tourists to visit. They will not communicate with any ordinary Japanese because they usually do not speak English. I thought I might have to change this place into something memorable for them to be given chances to converse with some Japanese like me as a place of interchange. I talked to my manager about it, he completely agreed, and I decided to talk to them more in earnest. You must serve as a guard 100 percent and as a guide 200 percent. So I began to ask tourists coming near me questions about Olympics. For example, I asked, "What event did Sweden host together at the time of Melbourne Olympics in 1956?" The correct answer is equestrian. Sending horses to Oceania would take a lot of time then. The horses had to be on quarantine for six months. The horse riders could not have prepared themselves for the event, if the horses had been sent to Australia. Now the rule loosened. It became no problem at the time of Sydney Olympics. I explained the Braille was used on the torch for the Rio Olympics and Paralympics. I tried to further interchange with tourists. (Later I knew on some TV program what foreign tourists wanted was an exchange with Japanese people.) I asked a foreign tourist, English o espanol? Then they answered "English" or "Spanish" or another native language. I asked, "English, Spanish, Portuguese, or French." Sometimes, their answers were Italian or German. On such occasions, I tried to utter greeting words. Italian is very much similar to Spanish in one sense. I had studied German in my thirties a little. I wished that I would also speak them someday. Actually Indo-European languages have lots in common with each other. Luckily, we, Japanese, know Chinese characters and should try to write Chinese characters to communicate with many Chinese tourists, though we generally cannot pronounce Chinese. Four tones for Chinese and eight tones for Thai look beyond our power. Without knowing the tone, I read a Chinese sentence made of mostly 'mar' sounds slowly. "Mahma Chee Mah Mah Man Mahma." It means "Mother rode on a horseback, but the horse went too slow and the mother cursed at the horse." Some Chinese person took the note of that expression, thinking it was funny. I read in Korean, "Shall I take your picture?" Earlier two Korean young girls had said to my asking in English, "No, don't bother." This time they stood up and I took their pictures with their smart-phones. Seniors are respected in Korea.

Reflecting on the 1964 Tokyo Olympics Japanese interpreters only spoke one foreign language. A dozen European interpreters came from Europe to make up for the insufficiency of interpreters. They looked brilliant when I heard them switch from English to French, to Spanish, to Italian and so on. Since I became a teacher of English in my late thirties, I should call myself an English professional. Thanks to my previous job opportunities I still retain the skills of Spanish, Portuguese, and French.

Besides, I had studied Russian, Greek, German, Italian, Chinese, Korean and Indonesian, though,

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for a short period of time. Long time ago I was told Rumanian is very much like Spanish. I happened to hear Rumanian in the elevator at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government forty-five storied Twin Tower. I thought I learned Rumanian in three minutes, while I was with the Rumanian tourists in the elevator. Latin languages are very much similar amazingly. Hearing many German tourists, I felt very motivated to learn it.

April 28 — I failed to bring my mobile-phone. I must call my office twice, once in the morning and another time in the evening. I must wear a name tag to enter the Metropolitan Building. Once I forgot to bring the tag. Guards change every day. Thanks to some entrance guard remembering me, I was able to go inside. I thanked the person, still joking, “You allowed me in because I was already a big shot.” He denied it flatly. It was a serious matter, not a matter to be joked about. Many foreign tourists came to ask about good spots to eat, to visit or to have fun. I was new there. I tried to collect some materials to know about surrounding areas, but in vain. The number of materials was limited. I had to tell them to ask the tourist information center on the first floor. I was asked about things like, “Where are sports wears selling?” “Where is the most reasonably-priced restaurant?” and so on. They asked about the ways to go to Kabukicho, Omoide Yokochō, Shinjyuku Gyoen, Edo-Tokyo Museum, Japanese Sword Museum, most of which I know and wished to show them around on the concrete. But I could not because of my job needing to hang on there. I wanted to play some role to let them know Tokyo better and make their visits really memorable ones. (Because of Coronavirus outbreak in 2020 such places must have been so badly hit without foreign tourists.)

April 29 — An Elena Congosto, the partially-visual impaired marathon runner, who won the bronze medal in Rio Paralympics came to see our exhibit with her escort runner. They asked me to take their picture in front of the Rio torch, which she had held. She must be training hard to participate in the coming Tokyo Paralympics.

I had previous appointments with medical doctors on May 1, 8 and 15 to have a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) test to remove my possibly cancerous atheroma partly on my latissimus dorsi. Because of my job I put it off till October. (Later I was told, “To judge its malignancy the result would be known only after its removal.” On October 18 I had a day-surgery and was able to remove it successfully. I tested negative fortunately.) During the so-called Golden Week from May 3rd till 8th I was the only worker to start work at 7:30 at the Olympic and Paralympic flag exhibits. No guards worked. Sightseers from around the world tried to talk to me from thick outside windows to ask about the way to the entrance or the time to open or so, but in vain. Their voices were not audible at all. After returning home that day I printed out some words to convey the message to the way to the entrance and the time to open.

The guides and the receptionists come at 8:30. The elevator receptionists start work at 9:30. They stand near the door and are by the hidden side of the window. They cannot see outside. So I often went to the thick window to show them the way to the entrance by printed sheets. I often showed visitors the way to the elevators, using the printed sheets from inside the building.

May 9 — Two young American girls asked me how to go to the Kit Kat Factory in Shinjyuku. I told them to go downstairs to the Tourist Information Center on the first floor. I wished I had known. I am interested in visiting the factory because I had visited a Cadbury chocolate factory in

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Dunedin, New Zealand.

May 10— I began to get used to this job. Making use of this opportunity, I decided I would try to be deca-lingual. To make foreign tourists' visits to Japan memorable ones I really felt not only languages but knowledge do matter. I should be versed in Olympics and many cultural things. Two bouldering Australian male climbers came with their female coach. They had participated in the competition in Hachioji. Bouldering is attracting many young people and it will be a good Tokyo Olympic sporting event in '2020' which was postponed till 2021.

May 11— Two Polish men were sitting together. They were two of a large Polish sightseers' group. They did not go to the top floor of the tower where there is a travellers' shop. I asked them what they would say "How are you?" in Polish. They answered 'yakushimasu.' It is so easy for Japanese to remember. Yakushimasu (phonetic) is a Polish expression for 'How are you?' But in Japanese it surprisingly means 'Let me translate.' My job was to translate. Wow, a fantastic answer to my question. About thirty Polish people who had been to the top of the building came out of the elevator. I shouted in a loud voice, 'yakushimasu.' They were all very happy to hear "How are you?" in Polish. I wished to learn all greeting words around the world. They try to speak some words in Japanese. Some people kindly applaud my English abilities, saying "Your English is perfect." "You are unique. Japanese do not speak English." "Are you Japanese?" "Were you in Brazil?" (to my Portuguese) They often told me such flattering words, which naturally I liked to hear. I talked to foreign travelers in front of Japanese high school students on their excursion from the countryside of Japan to motivate them to study English. But nothing seemed to encourage students to learn the foreign language. Some Japanese said, "You look affected when you speak English in Japan." "You put on airs." I spoke five languages each day. So many people seem to have been interested in my linguistic abilities. It looked as if some who had failed to be chosen for this job came and heard me speak foreign languages. Some old woman came and said, "My daughter speaks English and Chinese." "That is great." I responded to her by saying "In our time China was geographically near but so unknown and so far away. We see so many Chinese travelers in Japan now." I often spoke in Japanese, too. They asked me whether or not I could speak English or are they recruiting volunteer guides for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics?

I used to practice on the horizontal bar for several years in my youth, so I am round-shouldered and pigeon-breasted. So I may look like a real guard. A Karate person came. He was no danger, but said jokingly, "I know Karate." I replied, "I knew Mass Oyama, a real hero and a founder of Kyokushin, who had more than thirty million believers around the world." Without knowing Karate at all, I happened to talk to Mr. Oyama, when I was with two Egyptians. One was a colonel, and I spent some time at Shinbashi Daiichi Hotel. Telling about him really matched my job as a guard. By the way Mass Oyama was a fantastic person. I wrote a private letter to him and amazingly wrote a kind letter back to me personally and kept on sending me yearly greeting cards until his flu-caused rather sudden death at the age of seventy. Actually the job as a guard is so important.

May 12— It is not easy to keep standing without going to the toilet for many hours. I knew humans could, to some degree. It leads to your confidence in yourself.

May 13— Today I had a nice sub-supporter. I was able to relax for 2.5 hours. I was able to rest my legs, too.

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May 14—In order to have exchange I said to a foreign person nearby, “Shall I take your picture, Sir?” I was told, “Are you getting any money for your service?” I was shocked to hear it. “No, no. In Japan there is no tipping.” I barely uttered. I realized that words can be construed in many ways. I need to know more to be a good cross-cultural communicator. Today I had two supporters to help me for three hours. Originally, I was promised to have four-hour break each day.

May 15—I had an appointment to go to a hospital at Shinanomachi for a regular check-up. After that I saw my brother at Maruzen Bookstore, Ochanomizu. He was rather at the bottom, not even a mediocre student, until he became a second year student in his private high school. Until recently he was a Professor teaching business and an assistant to President at a university in Nagoya. After talking with him for a couple of hours I went to a wake of my friend’s deceased mother at Ochanomizu. After all there was no time to rest on that day.

May 16—The South Observatory on the top floor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Twin Tower was closed.

May 17—The Olympic Committee Delegation from New Zealand came. They sat in front of the Olympic and Paralympic Flags, my workplace, to adjust time to see Ms. Koike, the Governor. Before the prime minister of New Zealand arrived, they had some time to share with me. One of them was in charge of a boat event for the Olympics. For three weeks in 2009 I had a homestay at David Bond’s house. He often boasted about his nephew who participated in world championships and lamented his nephew’s missing the medal at the time. Hearing me talk about his nephew, he said his nephew was a well-known figure winning the gold medal in another world championship. He knew David Bond and introduced me to all there as one who stayed in his uncle’s house. I kept on talking with him for ten minutes or so. Later that day on TV the person was seen together with Mr. Abe, the then Prime Minister of Japan, and the NZ Prime Minister. Everything that happened on that day was like a miracle. What a small world! They took my picture with their mobile phones. Naturally, I do not have the photo.

May 18—There was held a ‘City Mine Ceremony.’ This was a scheme to collect old portable phones and mobile phones to return them to natural resources and/or to change them into the upcoming Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic medals. Many citizens came to the Metropolitan Government with their mobile phones. In return they were given Olympic and Paralympic badges. The number of such phones exceeded 30,000. I directly heard Ms. Koike say, “The Prime Minister of New Zealand also donated his phone, saying some New Zealander will take it back as a gold medal winner of the Tokyo Olympics.” She was sailing very smoothly then as a rising star, the most promising candidate for the first female premiership. I saw her three times a day every weekday.

May 19—Many sightseers went to Tsukiji near Ginza early morning before coming to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Twin Tower. Tsukiji is famous as a fish bidding site. Many foreign tourists ate raw fish Sushi as morning breakfast. I asked them how much it cost them. They answered the meal cost Yen 4,100 (forty U.S. Dollars). Rather expensive.

They said, “There was a long line for Yen 1,400 Sushi, so it could not be helped.” Generally-speaking, many foreign tourists are happy about reasonably-priced healthy Japanese meals. One person said, “Everything is very expensive abroad. In Japan many foods are not so expensive. We are quite happy. But the quantity of salad is not enough.” If you compare the size of Canadian

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McDonald's hamburger with that of Japanese, the former is about three times bigger, as you may know.

Today, unlike all my other days in life something new happened. Five middle-aged Korean women wearing sun glasses came to me. They could not see my wrinkles, pigmentation of skins. They kindly said, "You look handsome. Please shake hands with us." They changed turns and shook hands with me. Could I possibly be an idol for middle-aged women? They took my photo with and without them as a kind of star. Can this be understandable? I have never had such a nice experience in life. I had never been popular with women. How good it is to be a center of attention! It is like becoming a Korean movie star. It was like a dream, but it was not. One Korean lady said, "If you learn twenty-six Korean letters, the Korean language is very easy." I really felt like studying Korean. I have enjoyed some Hanryu-style Korean dramas and movies. I made up my mind to study the language.

The torch used at Rio Olympics was taken out from the acrylic case. The female staff was kind enough to offer an opportunity to hold it tight. I had often been asked how much it weighed. I felt it weighed about a kilogram. I can now give an answer to the frequently-asked question.

May 20 — The government office and its twin tower were entirely closed and I was able to recuperate at last.

May 21 — I had a previously fixed day-off. I participated in a 100 meter butterfly race at Tokyo Masters Swimming Championship at Edogawa, Tokyo. It was a devastating worst personal record for me. (The rule had changed this year. That might have affected my way of swimming. Rather the age told on me.)

After the race I headed to my college alumni association, where there was a request to write something about the meeting in an authoritative monthly Mita Hyoron Journal published by Keio University. Among the seventy-five graduates from my economics-major class, some played conspicuous roles in business world. I heard Yoshikuni Kanai became a vice chairperson of the Giant Trading House, Mitsubishi Shoji. I asked a colleague called Toyoda(ta) if he was within the family of Toyota Motors Corporation. The charismatic president of Toyota Motors is a junior to us. He said, "I was an heir to a Korean King." (Oh, my God. Anybody could say such a thing, but maybe he was.) Mr. Suhara founded a Daiwa Soken (top-rate Stock/Security Consultancy). I did not write about them. But I wrote about three other classmates in the journal. Let me translate in part what I wrote in Japanese:

After a minute-long silent prayer for the deceased the class reunion started with Mr. Oyama's lambent MC remark. He played a large role to materialize world-famous One Piece as Managing Director of Toei Animation. (In December, I went to Edogawa University to audit a class with his attendance, knowing he was in charge of One Piece. I continued to write.) I mentioned the name of Mr. Yoshinori Imai, as an executive vice chairperson of the public NHK broadcasting corporation, to toast to our success and health. (It continued.) I wrote, in closing, "Mr. Kajiyama, who was successful for the first time in Japan in multi-operation of computers in late 1960s, made his speech."

May 22 — The North Observatory was closed. I was told by a foreign traveler, who said the information was available over the Internet. I asked a female guide at the general information desk to confirm its information. She said, "The North Observatory is open today." So I kept on informing

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foreign travelers of it being open. Later I noticed the elevator to the north observatory was not running. I told the female guide at the desk that the North Observatory was not running. She then gave me a schedule list of the observatory, saying the guides give out list of schedules to visitors freely. They had this kind of material. It was the first time for me to see one. It is a kind of bureaucratic sectionalism as is found everywhere in Japan. Do not only do the job 'laterally'. Do the job 'horizontally' for job improvements, minding what others are doing.

May 23— A young woman said to me, "There's a real Olympic Flag used at the time of Olympics back in 1964 at (a prestigious) Shuyuukan High School in Fukuoka ." How can it be? I wondered. The Olympic flags have been handed down. It is not a thing to remain in one place. Is it a replica? I wanted to confirm and dared to ask the principal of the school, who was kind enough to tell me over the phone as follows:

Daigoro Yasukawa, the then chairperson of the Tokyo Olympic Organizing Committee was presented this flag by Mr. Brandage, the then I.O.C. chairperson to applaud the success and good management of the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. Mr. Yasukawa was Chairperson of Kyushu Power Co. and Yasukawa Electric Co. He was also a chairperson of the school alumni association and gave it to his alma mater, saying that as an individual it is no easy matter to keep a flag in person and asked if the school could accept the flag. The flag had been used for many years on field days in the school. The flag was damaged and now is kept in the gymnasium. Now they are using a replica. Mr. Yasukawa visited the school to give lectures on several occasions. (I know him by name since under his name I was entrusted with the job of interpreter for the 1964 Olympic Organizing Committee and the frame hung for many years in my house until recently.) In passing, as the most prestigious high school in Kyushu Island, the school has produced many celebrities like Taku Yamazaki the long-time No.2 in politics and Koki Hirota, who was sentenced to death after World War II as former, though non-military, prime minister of Japan during World War II.

May 25— A young female architect came from Turkey to see the architectural structure of this building by Kenzo Tange. I asked her if she knew the old Turkish song popular in Japan in 1950s, sounding like Ushukudara Hiderike...., but she did not know the song. She called the spiral staircase behind me an oval staircase. Nice new naming to recall her. Some people call this building a Cathedral. The earthquakes often take place in Tokyo. Thanks to advancement of technology we began to build high-rise towers forty-five years ago.

Can many skyscrapers in Tokyo resist the shock from soon-to-come earthquakes, including this tall building? Joint oscillation can cause many skyscrapers to fall down.

One month has passed since I took up this job. Honestly speaking, I was tired out. On a holiday the tower is open from 9:00 and the observatories from 9:30. Until that time I am the only one. Many sightseers come early and ask from the outside window, but neither of us can hear. I use body language and print-outs to show what and how. The number of sightseers I saw outside counted more than fifty.

May 28— I took a day-off to see my daughter's family and my wife in Osaka. I was scheduled to participate in the masters' short-course swimming championship at Kyoto Aquatic Center in the west of Kyoto. The result was my personal worst like the one a week before. (In November, I recorded the personal best (PB) in 100 meter backstroke.) Only two participated in 200 meter

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individual medley race, so I won the silver medal. After the race, I saw my wife who came from Osaka. We went to Suzumushidera (Bell ringing Cricket) Temple. We passed by the famous moss-grown Kokedera Temple. Without prior approval one cannot enter the temple.

The chief priest's talk at the Suzumushidera Temple was funny, enlightening and interesting. We took a ride on a train and got off soon afterward. At Matsuo-Taisha Shrine, near the Nishi-Kyogoku station, I offered to take a picture of a family with a new-born baby. In the evening Keiko and I had a buffet dinner with my daughter's family.

May 29 — Keiko and I took a stroll around the National Treasure Tofukuji Temple. Kyoto is truly magnificent with so many attractive temples, shrines and a lot of other scenic spots. Keiko and I were enjoying s seabream soup at an elegant Japanese restaurant when a foreign husband and his wife came into the restaurant, saying in panic he had lost his wallet with all credit cards and money. I stood up and accompanied him to the police box nearby, saying that in Japan most lost properties are usually found at the same place. At the police box nearby there was a police officer and apparently his wallet full of credit cards was on the table, waiting for the man who lost it. They looked so relieved. I returned to the same restaurant in joy. There was a person who was about to take the photo of the restaurant. He had kindly taken our picture at the Tofukuji temple. I told him about my nice experience there and interrupted his taking the photo of the restaurant. He said, "This is Japan." Maybe he was a Michelin's guide editor, wanting to rank the Japanese restaurant with some star mark. He was not an English person. I wonder even now.

May 30 — The six round of my zodiac sign, Gemini, came. I am seventy-two years old. In Chinese calendar it is the Year of the Cock. Tomorrow I will leave the company. I decided to see how things will go if I do not try to communicate with tourists. I wondered what would happen if I did not do the job as a guide at all. Apparently, it is better to do a job as a guide rather than just standing to be on guard. I do not take the trouble of speaking, which is easier that way.

May 31 — It is the last day I work here. Thus today I was finally assigned a job to work here as a sub-supporter to help the main guide only from 10:00 to 16:00. I naturally wanted to make today a memorable one. The beauties from Taiwan came. One of them was in charge of publicity at the time of Rio Olympics. Another Taiwanese wanted to take a picture of mine with me, which was so nice and encouraging on the last day of work here. I asked them to take a picture of mine with them, saying that today was the last day of my work here and that they were my angels. Today I wore the tiny 1964 Japanese flag badge for the first and the last time here. She might use the photo somewhere in some magazine.

June 2 — Mr. F. Tanaka (assumed name), my manager from the security company who most often helped me to replace me during my lunch break, called me on the telephone and said, "My successor already started to 'cry' for help. Can't you come and help him for twenty minutes or so during his lunch break?" What a soothing call! I thanked him, saying "I am kind of athletic, but he is academic. Please send my best regards to him." His words were so nice. All my toils seemed to have gone away.

This is what happened to me in five weeks as an 'un'official guide for the coming 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Since the Coronavirus outbreak is still telling on all countries around the world, the '2020'

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Tokyo Olympics might not be held again in our lament.

Epilogue

One big reason to travel abroad is to make one's trip a memorable one. To make one's trip memorable I believe there has to be an opportunity to make friends with local people. Japanese people usually do not speak English. So it may not be easy for them to get acquainted with Japanese. If a Japanese were to talk to a foreign tourist, he or she would be on guard. They should have chances to communicate with and know Japanese. Among many Japanese proverbs there is 'See no evil, hear no evil, say no evil.' You will have no harm if you do not say. Foreigners may not understand this.

It reminds us of Kenichi Takemura's well-known remark, "Japanese common sense is opposite of foreigners' one." Japanese usually do not try to learn to speak English. I must emphasize the fact, "Without learning foreign languages, how can we understand and show hospitality OMOTENASHI?" M. Rogee announced Tokyo as the host city of Olympics 2020, adding Japan to learn from its experience. What and how on earth do we Japanese learn from the Tokyo Olympics? Japan is a closed society. Many Japanese seem to think Japanese are polite. They may not be so polite. Sometimes they may be taken as indecent or rude. There are not enough English signs. Japanese may not know other cultures well enough. For example, whenever I take a picture of some foreign people, they all thank me very much, confirming the picture and saying what a beautiful picture you took. Using gestures rather exaggeratingly, they show their appreciation. There was only one Japanese person with kids who did it. As a Japanese, I do not care at all about not being thanked so much. I wonder what and how foreign tourists think about Japanese if Japanese do not do it. They may think how odd and awkward they are. In Japan you may not say what you may have to say. It is a mind-reading society. Many other countries are quite contrary to Japan or different from Japan. They are often melting pots of races. What is not said is not understood. I hope Japanese people will learn English and cultures of other countries more eagerly. They should aggressively show more kindness toward foreign people. Being shy is not regarded highly in other cultures. We may/should have Olympics and Paralympics for many reasons next year and welcome foreign visitors again.

Afterwards

In July I had a few chances to attend Hippo Club Members' club. They say, "Let's speak many languages." Speaking several languages is not anything new to them. I do not need to be proud of being multi-lingual. Anyone can learn several languages. I started Spanish classes in one city facility. As many as seven people came. I enjoyed preparing materials from old sono-sheets and discs. I converted them into CD. I have plenty of time. I studied German in earnest. There was a talk by a German about Christmas in Germany one day. The speaker came in her car and hit one pole damaging her car. I realized that I could only say a few words, which really inspired me to learn German. I wished to say more but in vain. Failures lead to success. This kind of trial and error experience is really great to learn foreign languages. Students need to have opportunities to use the language to learn. If you do not use a foreign language, you will never learn it for life.

Ask, and it shall be given you.

Maybe we can have Tokyo Olympics in spite of the Covid-19 outbreak. English has become a common language in the world.

Let's make up our mind to master it?

Endnotes

I decided to translate my Japanese essay published in the Edogawa University Journal on March 15, 2018 into English this time partly because the 2020 Tokyo Olympics were postponed by one year till July, 2021 because of the Coronavirus outbreak and, if the Olympics can still be held, this article I dared to translate into English may still have some little value to be published in English.

(This Japanese essay was honorably chosen as one of the collected articles on the English Language (<http://www.ronsetsu.co.jp/ie51/ROKSETSU-E51.pdf>), following my earlier essay a year before also chosen as one of the collected articles on the English Language.)

I had translated on March 15, 2019 that earlier Japanese essay of mine published in the Edogawa University Journal on March 15, 2017, whose theme went as follows:

Essay — What do I expect of English Education in Japan? Reflecting on my experience as an interpreter for the Tokyo Olympic Organizing Committee in 1964

Special mention

**Ms. Modi Armene, E.U. Open Seminar Speaker,
was awarded Albert Schweitzer Medal**

Tadaaki Kato

Foreword

In 2012 Modi Armene made an ardent speech at Edogawa University under the theme, "Indian Youth, A Dynamic Force in Changing India." (See her presentation sheets with my translation in E.U. EILE Journal Vol.11 March, 2011.) I recall Armene and I arrived at E. U. Campus a little late by ten minutes on 16th May, 2012 and it might have worried President Ichimura, Ms. Hashimoto, his secretary, and Prof. Ebisawa who gathered a large audience. After her well-organized speech I said to a large audience, mostly students, "You can ask questions in Japanese if you want. So please do not hesitate." All students that stood up asked good questions in English, which was a pleasant surprise as a teacher of English.

The national strength cannot be expressed with the size of population. However, China received many kinds of support from all developed countries and big businesses to grow into No. 2 GDP country. The population of India grew to be 1.35 billion in 2019, almost the same as that of China, which will catch up with her population-wise in a few more years. Indian GDP stands at No.6 now. She has kept growing very rapidly. India has the most IT engineers. Automotive industries are rapidly growing like many other industries in India. She is and will grow to be a bigger power very soon.

On the other hand, when we talk of India, many people still think it is a poor country with caste system. People sleep outside or live miserably. In my college days, I recall J.K. Galbraith, the Nobel Prize Winner for economics, who wrote 'the New Industrial State', say "It is hard for India to grow," after having spent some years as the Ambassador of the U.S.A. in India. Actually, India still has many problems to overcome.

Ms. Armene Modi had entered Columbia University Teachers College in Tokyo a year earlier than I. We are alumni. After graduation, in 2000 she took the trouble of hosting the International Institute of Peace Education at United World College (then headed by the former South African President, Nelson Mandela, as its College President) on the Deccan, a resort area, two hours away from Pune (formerly Poona) by car. I wrote about some of my experiences there in Japanese in EILE E.U. Journal mentioned earlier. "— If the ratio of Indian males is 1000, its female ratio is 930, suggesting infanticide. Usually the female ratio is several percent higher in developed countries. Average illiteracy in India was 57 percent. That of women stood high at 71 percent. When food is short, women must forbear. There are much more ill-nourished women than men."

I cannot help remembering an Indian woman carrying a heavy water tub on her head to fetch

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water four to five kilometers away every day. On 26th, that year all overseas participants visited a one-room house in the village. In the dark there was only one lamp in the back area. I saw a baby sleeping in the cradle. We went to a primary school there and saw much more number of pupils were boys, which indicated some girls could not attend classes. Participants gave them a pencil or small things like that. Children and their young male teacher were joyous.

Ashta No Kai has a chapter in Shizuoka, Japan, too. Ashita in Japanese means 'tomorrow'. I wanted to confirm whether or not Ashta means something else in Hindi. An Indian person whom I asked replied, "It means 'believe'."

Illiteracy is a big issue to be solved. Especially female illiteracy is. Women usually spend more time with children and need to educate their children more than their husbands. All humans have rights to live in comfort and lead a good life. Without being able to read, they will be handicapped and may not profit from being illiterate.

This task has been quite challenging to Ms. Modi. It is a matter of course that she was awarded this medal. I sincerely would like to give her a big applause.

I sent an e-mail to her, saying "I knew of your article headline in the Hindustan Times, but no lead, nothing more at all." Then, she replied that she did not know of the article in the (authoritative) Hindustan Times, looked for it and sent it to me." Here I also included the online ceremony and her speech and humbly translated them, so that many more Japanese may know of India and of her winning the medal.

From the Hindustan Times in April, 2020

Pune's Armene Modi awarded Albert Schweitzer medal by World Literacy Foundation

Armene Modi, the founder of Pune based non-governmental organization (NGO) Ashta No Kai, was awarded the Albert Schweitzer award by the world literacy foundation, U.K. (WLF) in an online ceremony for her "academic excellence and extensive service in education and literacy." This online ceremony was held on April 18, 2020.

Ashta No Kai, the non-profit organization has been educating and empowering rural women and girls in ten villages of Shirur taluka of Pune district since 1998. The award citation noted that, "Armene's exceptional efforts towards empowering rural women in India has helped to improve the educational outcomes of hundreds of adolescent girls over the last two decades."

The award named after Albert Schweitzer, the famous Austrian, is presented to an individual who has made outstanding contribution to literature through their intellectual work in both writing and research. Armene said, "Issues of poverty and illiteracy are not the problems of just the poor and marginalized alone, but universal issues that concern us all."

In an online message, Andrew Kay, chief executive officer of WLF said the award aimed to celebrate the valuable contribution of Armene Modi to education in India over the past 22 years.

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The WLF strives to ensure that every young individual has the opportunity to acquire literacy and reading skills to reach their full potential. This year's online world literacy summit on April 18 brought together leaders from 85 countries representing over two-thirds of the world's population.

Albert Schweitzer Medal awarded to Armene Modi for her academic excellence and extensive service in education and literacy.

The presentation was made today at the World Literacy Summit 2020.

"In the firm belief that issues of poverty and illiteracy are not the problems of just the poor and marginalized alone, but universal issues that concern us all" — Armene Modi, 2020 Albert Schweitzer Medalist.

"We face a global literacy crisis with 91% of children in the world not attending school right now" — Andrew Kay, World Literacy Foundation CEO

April 18, 2020 — Today, we recognize Armene Modi with the Albert Schweitzer award which celebrates both academic excellence and extensive service to the community in the field of education and literacy in India.

The award is named after Albert Schweitzer, the famous Austrian who first came to Oxford University in 1922. Albert Schweitzer Medal is an award presented to an individual who has made outstanding contribution to literature through their intellectual work in both writing and research.

Armene Modi is the founder of Ashta No Kai, a non-profit organization that aims to educate and empower rural women and girls in 10 villages in Pune District, India. Since 1998, Armene's exceptional efforts towards empowering rural women in India has helped to improve the educational outcomes of hundreds of adolescent girls over the years.

Today, 770 million people cannot read a single word, while another 2 billion people struggle to read a full sentence. Illiteracy is a global crisis, and the World Literacy Foundation aims to educate people on the benefit of acquiring even basic literacy skills. The cycle begins with a child struggling to read, progressing into an adult who struggles with literacy and as a result becomes a victim of issues relating to unemployment, welfare, crime and wellbeing.

Andrew Kay, CEO of the World Literacy foundation, explains that this award aims to celebrate the valuable contribution of Armene Modi to education in India over the past 22 years. In 2020, in the midst of a global pandemic, it is estimated that 1.5 billion young people are not currently attending school, many of which do not have access to online learning. As a result, it is likely that education enrolments are going to fall in the coming months and many will be faced with unfortunate circumstances.

The World Literacy Summit awards ceremony will be held as an online experience this year on April 18.

Ask, and it shall be given you.

About the World Literacy Summit (WLS)

The online World Literacy Summit brings together leaders from 85 countries representing over two-thirds of the world's population, and all with a single focus — advocating, championing and educating on the vital importance of improving literacy levels across the globe. For more information about the WLS please visit www.worldliteracysummit.org

About the World Literacy Foundation (WLF)

The WLF strives to ensure that every young individual, regardless of geographic location, has the opportunity to acquire literacy and reading skills to reach their full potential, succeed at school and beyond. The WLF works to provide free access to quality education materials and innovative solutions that target wide-scale illiteracy.

For more information about the WLF, please visit [www://worldliteracyfoundation.org](http://www.worldliteracyfoundation.org)

Further details about Armene Modi & Ashta No Kai <http://www.ashtanokai.org/>

Ms. Modi's speech

I am deeply humbled to receive this very special award and would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the esteemed members of the World Literacy Foundation for this great honour you have bestowed on me. It is a privilege to accept it on behalf of the women in the villages that we serve through our organization Ashta No Kai, as well as the many supporters who have believed in our cause over the years.

The medal will be especially treasured not only because it is named after one of my heroes, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a great humanitarian, and peace activist, but also because it is presented by the World Literacy Council, whose very important mission is to make literacy a human right for all a reality.

22 years ago I embarked on a journey inspired by Gandhi's oft-quoted message to "be the change you want to see in the world." My journey began when I came across a shocking statistic in India's 1991 Census, that 61 percent of Indian women were still illiterate more than four decades after India had gained independence. This statistic served as a wake-up call for me.

In the firm belief that issues of illiteracy, and poverty are not problems of the poor and marginalized alone but universal issues that concern us all, I felt compelled to give up my teaching career in Japan, where I lived at the time, and return to India. I decided to take up the challenge of making a dent, even if a small one, in improving literacy levels for women in rural areas where the illiteracy rate was the highest.

I had hoped to make an impact on the lives of a small number of women by providing them access to literacy. Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that my attempt to promote literacy would help to transform and make a positive difference in the lives of thousands of marginalized women and girls in rural India.

Our initial forays with the traditional model of literacy were not successful, but when we

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adopted a more holistic approach to literacy as a way to enable women to understand and control their world, women's motivation and interest shifted in a positive direction.

I am proud to report that providing literacy and education empowered our rural women. Rural women gained a significant voice in their homes and their communities. They became change agents actively participating in solving their own problems at the village level. Women who had until now never been outside their homes except to fetch water, began to participate in village assemblies and demand their rights. In several villages, women worked together to resolve problems of alcoholism and domestic violence.

Our various initiatives to promote education for adolescent girls including a Bicycle Bank and life-skills education also led to many positive outcomes. As more girls were enabled to continue their schooling, child marriages were arrested. The average age at marriage for girls in villages rose to 19 compared to the earlier 13.

Increased access to education for rural girls gave them wings to fly and pursue careers in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, and information technology, to name a few. These were opportunities which their mothers and grandmothers could never have availed of, since most of them did not have the chance to break free from the shackles of their poverty, powerlessness, and illiteracy.

I have never regretted the decision to "retire" from teaching and reinvent myself as a social activist. It has been a rich journey of discovery and learning and I am very grateful to those who have guided me along the way. I would like to thank the many friends and supporters of Ashta No Kai, from all over the world, who have walked side by side with me on this journey, not least, the women of our villages who believed in our vision and inspired and encouraged me to continue despite the many challenges we faced together.

Jawaharlal Nehru, independent India's first Prime Minister once observed that "to awaken people, the women must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves." I would like to think that in our own modest way, Ashta No Kai's work on female literacy and empowerment has been a small but significant step in the right direction, awakening some of India's women to move towards their own journey of empowerment. I would once again like to thank the World Literacy Council for this great honour.

Postscript

Because of the Coronavirus outbreak we do not know how India will be affected like the rest of the world. Several kinds of vaccines have been developed in some countries and they began to be used. We also had good news recently that antibody born out of 98 percent of patients seem to work for more than six months according to a university in Yokohama. We shall begin to see the path to conquer this pandemic. I wish the world would return to normal or grow to enjoy more peace, coexistence, solidarity and co-prosperity. Buddhism spread to Japan in olden times. The spirit of Buddhism is rooted in our minds. Indo-European languages are widely spoken except in East Asia and the Middle East. I think of the history of India. The importance of India will be felt more in the world. As the largest Democratic state, I hope, on this occasion, India will play a larger role to bring about world peace.

Ask, and it shall be given you.

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特別報告 [訳]

講演者 モデイ・アーミン氏が、
アルバート・シュバイツァー勲章に輝く

加 藤 忠 明

前 書

彼女には、平成 24 年（2012 年）5 月 16 日に、「インドの若者は、変わりゆくインド社会を支える力」と題して講演を行って頂いた。[江戸川大学語学教育研究所紀要第 11 号 2013 年 3 月 31 日発行参照乞う] 市村学長 [当時] や秘書の橋本さん、多くの学生を集めてくれた海老澤先生に、本人と私の到着が 10 数分遅れ、多大のご心配、ご迷惑をおかけしたことかと思ひ起す。彼女の熱心な講演の後「質問は、日本語でも良いですよ。躊躇わずにどうぞ」と語ったのに、質問者の学生全員が、英語で、直接質問している姿は、英語教員として、大変、頼もしいことで、正直、感動した。

国力を人口で示すのは、無理があるが、中国は、その巨大な人口に目を付けた世界中の政府や大企業の支援を背景に、巨大な国力を持つに至った。インドは、その中国に、過去十数年で、13 億 5 千万まで人口が増え、数年で追いつこうとしている。最近年、国内総生産 GDP 世界第 6 位となり、世界 2 位の中国同様、急成長を遂げてきた。インドが世界一の IT 技術者を擁し、自動車産業など、急発展を遂げ今後、世界に於ける地位を確実に高めて行くことは間違いないであろう。

インドというと、多くの人には、貧しい国というイメージが付きまとう。「新しい産業国家」を 1967 年に書いた J.K. ガルブレイス・ハーバード大教授（後に、ノーベル経済学賞を受賞）が、インド大使当時の記憶を振り返り、「インドが経済成長を遂げるとはとても思えない」としていたことを思い出す。実際、インドは未だに多くの課題を有している。

モデイ・アーミン氏は、米国ニューヨーク州コロンビア大学英語教授法修士（日本校）の二期生で、私は三期生。同窓である。彼女は、コロンビア大学 Betty Reardon 教授が率いる国際平和教育学会を、インド Pune から車で 2 時間、避暑地でもあるデカン高原の United World College（元南ア大統領ネルソン・マンデラが初代学長）で、2000 年に開催してくれ、多くの優れた知識人、軍人が参加した。その時の概要を、短大 [2001 年 3 月第 16 号] 紀要に掲載した。「— 人口比 男 1000 人に対し、女 930 人、間引きが行われている。食糧不足の時に誰が我慢するか。はるかに高い女性の栄養失調率がそれを語っている。文盲率 成人 57% に対し、女性は 71% である。—」と書いた。今でも思い出すのは、毎朝、大きな水のツボを頭に載せて、4~5 キロの道を歩く女性の姿。外国からの参加者が、7 月 26 日、プーネの村落にある住宅を訪れると、暗い土間の中、奥に電球が只一つ、そこに赤子がゆりかごで寝ている。小学校に行くと、男の子ばかりで、女の子は僅かである。初等教育を受けていない女の子が多数いることが分かる。小学校を訪れた大会参加者が鉛筆など一本一本を差し上げると、それだけで子供達は大喜びであった。Ashta No Kai は、彼女が静岡でも運動していて「あしたの会」でもあるが、Ashta の意味を確かめると、ヒンズー語で「信ずる」と言う事だと、日本に住むインド人が即答してくれた。

文盲、特に女性の文盲は大きな課題である。人生を識字できずに過ごすことは、豊かな人生を営む権

Ask, and it shall be given you.

利をもつべき人として、大変多くの損失である。その課題に、真っ向から立ち向かってきた彼女が、この度その賞に値するのは当然で、拍手喝さいを捧げたい。

この度、私が、「現地主要紙ヒンズスタン・タイムスの見出しだけしか見つけられない」と彼女に連絡したら、「同紙に掲載されていることは知らなかった」と言いながら、彼女が、その記事を探し出し、送ってくれた。その英文と、オンラインでの授賞式、その際の彼女のスピーチを、多くの方々に知って頂き度、ここに、訳出することとした。(拙訳謝す)

ヒンズスタン・タイムス記事 2020年4月20日

プーネのモデイ・アーミン氏、世界識字財団よりアルバート・シュバイツァー賞授与される

プーネのNGO（民間非営利団体）あしたの会創設者、アーミン・モデイ氏が（英国にある）世界識字財団より、彼女の「卓越した学術と教育及び識字に関する広い奉仕活動」に対し、オンラインでの祝典で、アルバート・シュバイツァー賞を授与される。このオンラインでの式典は、2020年4月18日開催された。

非営利団体あしたの会は、19989年以来、プーネ地方のシリルタルカにある10の村落で村の女性や少女を教育し、読み書きや自立する能力を付与する努力を続けてきた。表彰状には、「インドでの田舎に住む女性の自立に対するアーミンの尽力の結果、この二十年に亘り、何百人もの青年期の女性が教育の成果を挙げてきた」と書かれている。

この賞は、著名なオーストリア人、アルバート・シュバイツァーにちなんでつけられ、著述や、研究の知的作業を通じての学問・学識への顕著な貢献をした個人に贈られるものである。アーミンは、「貧困や、文盲問題は、貧乏な人、社会的に周縁に追いやられた人だけの問題ではなく、我々、全てに関わる問題です」と語った。

オンラインでの祝辞で、世界識字財団理事長のアンドリュー・ケイ氏は、賞の目的は、この22年間に亘るアーミン・モデイ氏のインドでの教育への価値ある貢献を祝う事を目的としていると言う。

世界識字財団は、全ての若人が読み書き能力など社会的に必要となる能力を確実に身に付けられるよう努力している。世界人口の三分の二にあたる85か国の世界識字問題のリーダー達が、4月18日にオンラインサミット会議に参加した。

(授与式)

アルバート・シュバイツァー賞、教育と識字への卓越した学術的成果と幅広い奉仕活動を称え、アーミン・モデイ氏に授与

授与式は、本日、2020年世界識字サミットで執り行われた。

「貧困と文盲の問題は、単に貧しい人や、社会的に周縁に追いやられた人だけの課題ではなく、我々、全てに関わる普遍的問題であるとの強い信念を持つ」

2020年アルバート・シュバイツァー賞受賞者 アーミン・モデイ氏

Ask, and it shall be given you.

「今、世界の91パーセントの子供が授業を受けていない、大変な危機に直面している」

世界識字財団理事長 アンドリュー・ケイ

2020年4月18日

本日、私共は、インドの共同社会での教育と識字の分野での卓越した学術上の成果と広範囲に亘る奉仕活動に尽力した事、双方を祝し、アーミン・モデイ氏にアルバート・シュバイツァーメダルを授与する。

この賞は、1922年にオックスフォード大学に入学した著名なオーストリア人アルバート・シュバイツァー氏に因んでつけられたものである。アルバート・シュバイツァーメダルは、著述や、研究面での知的作業で学問学識への多大なる貢献をした個人に贈られる。

アーミン・モデイ氏は、インド・プーネ地方の10の村落にいる田舎の女性、少女達が教育を受け読み書き能力や自立する力をつける事を目的とする非営利団体あしたの会の創設者である。1998年以降のインドでの田舎の女性たちの読み書きや自立能力をつけさせるために、多年に亘り、尽力してきた。

今日、7億7千万の人が一つの文字すら読めない。一方、20億の人が一つの文章を読むのに大変苦労している。文盲は、世界的な危機である。世界識字財団は、人々を教育し一様な基本的読み書き能力を身に付けさせる事を目的としている。このサイクルは、子供が読むことに苦しむ、成人が読むことに苦しむ、その結果として、失業や、福祉、犯罪、安寧に関する犠牲者となる悪循環へとつながる問題である。

世界識字財団のアンドリュー・ケイ理事長は、この賞が、過去22年に亘るインドでの教育に対するアーミン・モデイ氏の価値ある貢献を称えることを目的としていると語る。2020年は、疫病の世界的流行の最中、15億の若者が授業を受けられずにいる。その多くは、オンラインでの学習が出来ない状況にある。結果として、入学者数は、ここ、数か月減ることが予想される。そして、多くは、不幸な状況に置かれることとなろう。

世界識字サミットは、本年オンラインとしての初体験で、4月18日に行われた。

世界識字サミットについての英文略す。(当該英文ホームページ参照乞う)

世界識字財団についての英文略す。(当該英文ホームページ参照乞う)

アーミン・モデイ氏とあしたの会英文詳細(当該英文ホームページ参照乞う)

モデイ氏演説原稿拙訳

このような格別な賞を頂ける事に大変恐縮しております。私にこのような栄誉を授けてくださった世界識字財団の尊敬する皆様方に心からの敬意を表したいと存じます。私どもの組織を通じて私共が奉仕する村落の女性になり替わり、また、多年に亘り、私共の目的達成を信じて下さった多くの支援者になり替わり、この賞を受けることは大変な名誉であります。このメダルは、偉大なる人道主義者で平和活動家で有られたアルバート・シュバイツァー博士に因んでつけられた賞というだけでなく、すべての人の人権としての識字が現実となるように重要な使命を帯びていられる世界識字委員会によって贈られた

とすることから、特別な宝物として心に銘記すべき賞であります。

22年前、ガンジー氏の名言として多く引用される言葉、「世界であなが見たいその変化、それを実現するのはあなたです」に鼓舞され、私はその仕事に着手しました。1991年のインドの国勢調査で衝撃的な数値に出会ったのです。インドが独立してから40年になるのに、何と61パーセントのインド女性が未だ文盲であると言う事実、そこから私の（目的遂行の）旅が始まりました。この統計値が、私を目覚めさせることになりました。

貧困と文盲の問題は、単に貧しい人や、社会的に周縁に追いやられた人だけの課題ではなく、我々、全てに関わる普遍の問題であるとの強い信念を持ち、当時住んでいた日本での教育職（記者注：桜美林大学准教授）を諦めることが義務であると感じ、インドに戻ろうと思ったのです。小さな挑戦であっても、風穴を開けてみる、最も文盲率が高い田舎の女性たちの識字力を高める事を決意したのです。

僅かな数でしたが読み書きなど基本的能力を付けさせる機会を提供する事で、生活面で影響が出る事を期待しました。私の唐突もない夢で、まさか、田舎のインドで何千もの周縁に追いやられた女性や少女の生活を変え、プラスの効果が与えられるとは、夢にも思ってはいませんでした。

伝統的なやり方を踏襲する識字力モデルを活用する当初の企ては成功しませんでした。しかし、より、女性達が、自らの世界を理解し、管理できる能力をつけさせる方法としての基本的能力を、より全体的な観点で身につけさせようとしたことで、女性の動機づけが出来、関心もプラスに向かいました。

誇りを持って、識字力を付与した事、教育が私共の田舎の女性達に基本的読み書きや自立の能力を与える事が出来たと報告できます。田舎の女性達は、家庭内で、地域社会で、意味のある意見を言い始めたのです。村落の問題に対して自分達の問題解決に積極的に参加する変革推進者になったのです。水を入れに行き帰ってくる以外に外に出なかった女性達が、村落の集会に参加し、彼女らの権利を要求することを始めたのです。幾つかの村で、女性達は、アルコール依存の問題、家庭内暴力の問題を解決しようと、一緒に立ち上がりました。

私共の手始めに行った事の中に、自転車銀行や、生活技能教育がありますが、大変な成果を上げたと存じます。より多くの少女達が、教育の機会を受けられるようになり、若年結婚は、逮捕されるようになりました。結婚年齢は、平均して、13歳以下でしたが、19歳にもなりました。

村の少女たちは、教育の機会を受け、翼を持ち羽ばたくことが出来、僅かな例を挙げさせてもらって医療、歯学、薬学、工業技術、IT情報技術の道を歩めるようになりました。

彼女らの母親や、祖母たちには、与えられなかった機会です。貧困や、無力で、文盲で、その足枷から彼女らは、逃れられなかったのです。

教育界から「離れた」事、社会活動家へと全く違う生活を始めた事を後悔した事はありません。それは、発見と学習の豊かな道のりでした。その道に沿って、私をご指導いただいた方々に深く感謝しております。この旅で、私と共に歩いて下さった世界中のあしたの会の友人や、支援者の皆さまに感謝したいと存じます。その気持ちは、現在、一緒に直面している多くの課題にもかかわらず、村の女性達が私共の構想を信じ、鼓舞し、励ましてきてくれた事が大きかったです。

インドの初代首相のジャワハルラル・ネール氏は、かつて、「人々を目覚めさせるには女性が目覚めなければならぬ。一度、女性が動くと、家族が動き、村が動き、国が動く」と述べています。地味な活動ではありますが、女性の識字と自立に関わるあしたの会の仕事は小さなものとはいえ、正しい方向へと向かったもの、インドの女性の一部を自立の旅へと向かわせる事に目覚めさせた事にあったと存じます。この大きな名誉の受賞に対して、今一度、世界識字会議に深い感謝を申し上げます。

Ask, and it shall be given you.

あとがき

コロナ禍で、今後の世界、また、インドがどうなるのなかなか分からないが、ワクチンが開発され、横浜の大学での研究では、98%のコロナ患者について抗体の6ヶ月以上の長期の有効性が確認されたようで、コロナ克服の道筋もようやく見え始めた。再び、世界が正常に戻ることを願う。更に、皆が協力し合う共存共栄の社会へと向かうことを祈りたい。

仏教が、古代に日本にやってきて、ある意味、我々日本人には、インドは、我々の心の故郷でもある。又、インド・ヨーロッパ語は、中国や、極東、一部アジアを除き世界的に使用されている。今一度、インドの歴史に思いを馳せる。一方、これからインドの世界的に占める重要性が強く認識されることになるだろうと思う。世界最大の民主主義国家として、多くの課題を克服し、世界の平和に大きな役割を果たす存在になることを、この度のモデイ氏の受賞の報を受け強く願うものである。

参考資料

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