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An Educational program based on Buddhism for married women by Rissho Kosei-kai¹, Japan

In seinem Beitrag erläutert Koichi Kawamoto ein auf buddhistischer Grundlage entwickeltes Programm für Familienerziehung, das am Beispiel von Seminaren für verheiratete Frauen, wie sie die buddhistische Laienbewegung Rissho Kosei Kai durchführt, exemplifiziert wird.

Die buddhistische Grundeinsicht des „Entstehens in Abhängigkeit“ leitet dazu an, sich bei innerfamiliären Problemen – besonders zwischen Eltern und Kindern – um ehrliche Ursachenerkundung zu bemühen. Es geht besonders darum, den jeweiligen „Eigenanteil“ an den Problemkonstellationen zu entdecken und mit Hilfe der Revision des eigenen Verhaltens eine erneuerte Konstellation in den Familienbeziehungen aufzubauen, durch die auf der Basis wechselseitiger Achtung und wechselseitigen Verstehens ein weniger spannungsvoller, im Ziel harmonisches Interagieren möglich wird. Wichtig ist dafür die Erörterung der Probleme in einer Gruppe, die mit den Betroffenen nachdenkt und bei der Findung von Lösungsmöglichkeiten unterstützt und mitträgt: sich dem Lernprozess stellen, in der Gruppe den Problemfall zur Debatte stellen, gute und schlechte Beispiele analysieren, die Zielrichtung einer Problemlösung diskutieren, über Wege zur Umsetzung sprechen sind – das sind erprobte Schritte, um in der Familie – als der Keimzelle der Gesellschaft – ein positives Klima aufzubauen.

1. The present situation in Japan

1) Current problems in Japan related to married women

In an attempt to categorize the familial problems in Japan, we can notice the following: psychological uneasiness of child-rearing (violence, refusal to attend school, truancy etc.), problems between husbands and wives (domestic violence, adultery etc.), lack of stability coming out from thoughts of divorce, anxieties due to teenagers' problems (possible seclusion for example), anxieties because of the fear of delinquency, as well as uneasiness due to problems associated with aging of the old parents of husbands and wives.

¹ Rissho Kosei-kai is a lay Buddhist Association dedicated to the teachings of Buddhism. It was instituted in 1938. At present, there are Rissho Kosei-kai members from both inside Japan as well as abroad. Currently, there are 42 overseas branches of Rissho Kosei-kai in 17 countries. As a lay Buddhist Association, Rissho Kosei-kai greatly emphasizes on applying the teachings of Buddhism in our daily life. We strongly believe that contribution to the society and to those dedicated to their religion is very important. The core concept of our teachings is derived from the Lotus Sutra, which belongs to the Mahayana Buddhism.

Recently some murder cases were reported of children killing their parents and unfortunately, the number of such cases gradually increases. I think, there are analogous cases in other countries.

2) Roles of married women

The situation of the woman in the family highly depends on the way she interacts with her husband, children, mother and father-in-law and the surrounding community. As a mother, she has great influence on the development and growth of her children.

The purpose of the school education is to prepare children to become adults by providing them with deep knowledge which can enable them to contribute to the society. In contrast, the purpose of the family education is to raise one's affluent human nature. Certainly, the only ones who can raise up a good heart in a child, are his parents. The willingness and desire to contribute to the society are lessons which need to be earned from the social education. Such type of education never ends. Therefore, the school education is based on knowledge, the family education – on emotion and the social education – on mind and will. It is necessary to raise our children up by using all these three types of education, striking a balance between them.

But in nowadays' families many parents place too much emphasis on knowledge education, forgetting about the emotions which a child needs in order to function well in the society. It seems, therefore, the education is losing the essential balance among knowledge, emotion and will.

Today, I would like to speak about family education based on Buddhism.

2. Teachings of Buddhism

1) Causation

Gautama Siddhartha went out from his house to seek the way to release all people from every trouble. After continuous and assiduous practice, he recognized the Law and the Truth called Dharma. Shakyamuni Buddha explained us this Law in comprehensible way and taught it in variable method adjustable to each listener. "Causation" is the basic principle of Buddhism.

This is: cause, condition, effect and residue. Each effect which might appear as a result-phenomenon always gives influence to the residue. The residue, on its turn, influences the cause and the condition. With their strong mutual influence, these four steps never cease to exist and develop.

All effects that might happen are regarded as a necessary conclusion and as a unity between cause and condition, proper to each effect. We can say more. All things that occur are outcome of certain causes and conditions. Everything comes up by suitable direction of an internal cause (cause) and of an indirect external cause (condition). In reverse, when the effect is already a fact, there exist suitable conditions as well.

Therefore, if there is a change in the cause and/or the condition, the effect and residue will naturally change as well.

2) Significance and application of Causation

In any case, to resolve any concrete developments, it is important to see them through the prism of the Causation. From the cause and residue we can learn about our own heart and mind, and this will influence later on the way we act. When we see the result of something we have done, we need to appreciate the fact that we are the cause and the surrounding condition as well. It is important to enrich our own heart and mind.

Let us suppose that a particular person is having problems with his/her child. Naturally, there can appear many things which would attract the parent's attention and cause worrying. When parents notice something bad around their child, it is necessary to look for the cause of the problem. Reflecting on your parental relations with your child, you could probably find out that they were not adequate. Maybe there was not enough respect to the child or something egoistic was said from the parents' side. One needs to change his heart and behavior towards his own child. One should be more respectful and careful in using the right words and actions in parent-child relationship. In such case, it is necessary to look carefully at one's own mistakes, leading to the bad result and try to improve the situation.

The basic application of Causation is reflecting on one's heart, words and action, which influence others and vice versa, the way our own actions influence them. The things we notice to happen are never accidental. Before any phenomenon itself becomes a fact, there are many words and acts gradually accumulating and leading to that outcome. The more we think about the relations between cause and effect, the more our heart will start accompanying our thoughts.

It is up to us to change the surrounding conditions and environment. In other words, every human being can change the future for the better.

3. Importance of close contact in family

1) Case

This is a case of a Japanese family.

That family consists of husband, wife and three children. When they moved to the mother's hometown, the first daughter stopped going to school. The mother never expected that exactly her child would refuse to go to school. She thought that her daughter may have been lonely and scared of separating from her close friends in the previous school. At that moment she was invited to participate in a seminar on Family Education. Through this seminar the mother of the girl mentioned above reflected on the fact that she couldn't listen attentively to her husband and children. She realized therefore that the cause of her daughter's changed behavior was not their family moving to a new

place, but her own attitude to her children. She learned that when parents change themselves, children will change too.

The first thing she did was to start appreciating and respecting the other family members: she began to listen carefully not only to her husband's talk, but also to his thoughts. She started therefore building stronger family bonds through using such words as "yes" and "thank you". Moreover, she learned that it is important to apologize when she was wrong, to praise her children when they do something good and to put all this into daily practice at their home.

While she kept practicing such behavior in her family, a change occurred little by little. The eldest daughter who refused to go to school and never listened to her parents, slowly-slowly started to open herself in front of her mother. The mother was overwhelmed by the feeling of joy. Her youngest child also said that their "mother has changed" and she recognized herself for the first time that she was supported, helped and watched by her family. When she talked sincerely with her husband as well, the heart of this mother entirely calmed down. Then children calmed down, too. And without even noticing, soon they could talk about everything all together in their family.

Looking back at the real life, the effect is connected with proper cause and condition. When we see the effect, we have to discover the process of reaching it, to look deeply at each one's personal history and living conditions. We should not watch each phenomenon through the prism of one's only egoistic sense of values. For example, if one forces his child to obey, and says solely phrases like "that is prohibited", "this is good", even if his advice is based on right sense of values the child will be reacting adversely. This is because children have their own sense of values, which may often differ from that of the adults. If however parents try to understand their children's opinion and way of thinking, there is no doubt that the children will try to do the same with their parents.

2) Philosophy of the Family Education

According to this truth, when bringing up a child, it is important to establish a good parent-child correlation. That means, one has to know the actual situation of his/her child. "Learning from a child" will be the best way to know one's child well enough.

Home education is an education formed by both parents and their children. A parent can reduce to a child only the share that a parent learned from a child. If you want that your child deserves 50 points, you, the parent must also have 50 points. If you want 80 points, you, the parent, have to try for 80 points. When a mother reflects on her actions and tries to improve whatever she does, she can improve the actions of her child too. To learn from a child means to have an attitude which allows the child to learn from the parent. Rather than thinking of education as a one-sided act, it is necessary that the parents reflect what kind of parents they need to be and to try to implement it. If the parents are grown up personalities, their child will also be mature like them.

3) *Parent-child and husband-wife relations*

Education of children is not realized only through relations between a child and a parent. Young children's education is greatly affected also by relations between both parents as married couple. Whenever one is concerned with some problem of a child, he/she has to investigate the relations of the couple this child lives with. In case of mental instability of the child, it is very often that the parents' relationship is not stable. Because the parents are the core of each family, I think about this point first. Even if each parent improves his/her relation with the child independently, no family problem can be solved, unless parents improve the relations between themselves.

4. Educational program

1. Learning = knowing the principle→ having courage to confront
2. Group work (giving an example to apply to a scene of discussion)
3. Analyzing the good and the bad examples
4. Talking together about the direction
5. Talking about how we can apply the principle

On merit of learning, hope and courage will await for us if we believe that any difficult situation can get over and we make efforts to improve it, without allowing ourselves to be shaken by the things we see around us. Being able to express our gratitude to everyone and everything will make us rich-hearted and well-grown up people. Being able to analyse ourselves through the effects and residues we receive. When we notice some bad things to happen around us, we should not blame the circumstances or the others, but should rather consider these phenomena as an important and needful work, given to us to be completed in order to improve ourselves.

Although we can understand these processes theoretically, it appears difficult to put them into practice. Besides, it is even more difficult for a single individual without the help of others. Therefore, if those processes happen to be of great importance, it is necessary for anyone to receive help and support from his/her partners (fellows). With their encouragement, one will undoubtedly feel the desire to proceed further (ahead) and to put his/her willingness into action. In Buddhism these partners are called "*Saṅgha*", and are put together with the Buddha and Dharma in the Three Seals of Dharma in terms of importance. *Saṅgha* profoundly deepens the importance of religion.

I believe that we, members of Rissho Kosei-kai can make warm home and peaceful society by making use of the teachings of Buddha in our everyday life. Our teachings are based on the Four Steps mentioned earlier, which are the other name of the Causation principle, and on sharing our various kinds of experience with each other. We put all our efforts in dealing with the familial problems, currently dominating in Japan, through our religious education.