

Appreciation for Ancestors

Hello, my name is Yugen Saito.

Today I would like to talk about gratitude to our ancestors.

During Obon and Ohigan, we visit the graves of our ancestors and make offerings to them, but it is important to have such a mindset not only during these events, but also in everyday life.

We call the source of life the Buddha, and our daily life is only a small activity from the perspective of the great life in the universe. When I think of my own life, how precious it is that I was born as a human being.

Our lives are usually centered around the "horizontal ties" of family, school, and society. By making offerings to your ancestors and joining hands with them, you will become aware of the "vertical connection" of life and feel gratitude for the gift of life, which will purify your mind.

Let's look at some Buddhist terms associated with ancestors.

O kage-sama.

Have you used the word "okagesama" lately?

Nowadays, with the Internet, we can buy anything we want without having to talk to anyone. However, the vegetables, meat, and fish we eat every day did not fall from the heavens. They arrive at our doorstep thanks to the combined efforts of many people who produce, process, transport, and sell them. Moreover, we humans are able to obtain these foods because of the bounty of nature.

It is not only food. Everything around us is made possible thanks to the "grace" of many beings.

The fact that we are able to live safely day in and day out is in itself the result of the protection of many beings. We must not forget the attitude of our ancestors, who were aware of these blessings and offered thanks to okagesama.

Originally, "okageasama" meant a being who is behind our backs to protect us. In other words, it referred to our ancestors. We are here because of many "kage-sama," including our ancestors, not to mention the gods and Buddha. Behind the "normal" things in our daily lives, there are many "okagesama" (thanks to you). The phrase, "I am fine, thanks to you," means, I am fine now because I am protected by many beings. Please try to use it yourself.

"A karma from a previous existence."

Have you ever heard the saying, "Sode Furi awu mo tasho no En" ("Sode Furi awase is also the fate of other lives")?

It means, "Even if it was just a chance encounter, like our sleeves waving to each other as we pass each other on the road, it was a chance encounter."

The correct kanji is "tasho" of "other," or "other life."

So you are saying, "We have met in other lives up to now."

There is another important meaning. The "other lives" actually refer to our ancestors.

I exist now because I have received various connections from my ancestors whom I have never met. Knowing that these connections have allowed us to live, we should be grateful for them. These words teach us the importance of this.

In light of this, I would like to explain once again, "Sode Furi awu mo tasho no En" which means;

Even if it is just a chance encounter, such as when our sleeves wave to each other as we pass each other on the road, it is caused by a deep green from our previous life or ancestors. Let us cherish even the smallest encounters with things and people.

I think this is a very nice phrase that expresses our gratitude to our ancestors.

Please try to have silent contact with your ancestors not only during the Obon and the equinoxes, but also in your daily life.

The postcard sermon series was given by Rev. Yugen Saito of Hagyu-ji temple . Translation and voice in English by Hirokazu Kosaka.