

Understanding Others' Pain

According to Oyasama, the divine voice within Her once said:
"You cannot save others if you live in a mansion with a stately gate."

Anecdotes of Oyasama, no. 5

In Aesop's Fables, there is a story that goes something like this: One day, a shepherd caught a pig, which squealed loudly and struggled to get free. At this, a sheep said to the pig: "You don't have to squeal. The shepherd regularly catches us and drags us off, but we don't make any fuss." The pig replied indignantly: "Your situation and mine are totally different. The shepherd only wants your wool, but he is after my bacon. He is going to kill me!"

We often say to people faced with a problem, "I know how you feel." However, how much do we really know? This "I know how you feel" attitude could be not only unhelpful but even annoying to them.



People in prominent positions probably cannot imagine how aggrieved people feel about the high-handed attitude of the authorities. Wealthy people cannot actually experience the struggle and pain of living in penury. If a rich man tells a poor man, "Your problem is just a lack of money, so try not to complain," chances are that the latter will simply retort, "What do you know!" It is like trying to pour beer into someone's upside-down glass, saying: "This is really good. Drink it." Obviously, no beer will go into the glass. The more one tries to pour, the more beer will be spilt, resulting in an ever greater mess.

Oyasama chose to live in the depths of poverty in accord with the divine words "Unless you fall to the depths of poverty, you cannot understand what sufferers feel." People had a deep and indescribable adoration for Her because they felt, "She knows exactly what it is like to suffer the way we do."

