

Hello everyone. Let's begin the study session for Saturday, July 18th. First, we will offer the Prayer for World Peace in Japanese and in English. I'll share my screen. Now then, let's begin.

< Prayer for World Peace >

Thank you very much.

Everyone, watching the news on television, some of you may be feeling a certain unease in your hearts. Specifically, the revision of the Imperial House Law. Several people have asked me for my thoughts on it. I believe they are wondering, 'Is Japan's future all right like this?'

First of all, the most important thing to look at in this matter — to state the conclusion first — is the spiritual lineage. The people of earth say, 'The bloodline matters,' 'Blood ties matter.' But blood ties are only a tiny part of the spiritual lineage.

If you look calmly at the facts alone — whether the Imperial family has truly come down to the present through a single bloodline — it is already not a single bloodline.

All of you, too, studied history when you were young. The history taught at school is not necessarily correct history. But even in that not-necessarily-correct history, conflicts arose within the Imperial family, or the people surrounding the Imperial family moved its members in an attempt to seize power — such things happened many times over these two thousand years.

As you also know, there were times when female emperors acceded to the throne — about eight times, I believe.

So I understand the feeling of watching the current movements of the Diet and thinking, 'Is this really all right?' But however the Diet moves and whatever it decides, Japan's Imperial House exists within the great flow of the universe, so things will be carried along in the very best way. In forms that human heads could never even conceive, things will be carried along in the very best way.

The current movements of the politicians, the movements of the Imperial Household Agency, the thoughts of the members of the Imperial family — we common people try to guess at them all, but for the most part we cannot know everything, can we. The patience and restraint of the politicians pushing the current movements — how deeply thought-out their actions really are.

Of course, the members of the Imperial family have no right of speech; they are now in a position where they cannot comment on such political matters. So each member of the Imperial family surely has their own feelings. But at the very least, within the Emperor's immediate family there is neither anxiety nor agitation. It is only the people around them who think, 'This is terrible.'

Japan's Emperor, under the present system of the country, holds the frustrating position of 'the symbol of the people,' 'the symbolic Emperor.' But in truth, he is the center of Japan. In the Emperor's heart there is not the slightest thought of his own convenience or the happiness of his own family. What he thinks of, always, is the tranquility of the people of Japan and the peace of the world. In the heart of His Majesty the Emperor, there is nothing else.

We too — the length of time we have been praying differs from person to person — have been praying continuously for the peace of the world and for the awakening and revival of humanity's divinity. In the midst of that, our private self-interest has faded away, and from the time we wake in the morning until we sleep at night, what we think, what we speak, and what we express in action has all become the happiness of humanity, the peace of humanity, the harmony of humanity — everything becoming better.

Why do I now keep saying humanity, humanity? Nature matters too, and all living things matter. But unless human beings revive their divinity, neither nature nor the world of the animals will become better.

This is the reason why the opening words of the Prayer for World Peace in Japanese are not 'May the world be peaceful,' but 'May world humanity be peaceful.'

If humanity becomes fine and true, the natural world will come into harmony, and the world of the animals — which now runs on this ecosystem of the strong devouring the weak — will change into an age where all living creatures can live together in friendship. It all comes down to whether human beings change or not.

If human beings change, the natural world becomes better. The world of the animals, the world of all living things, becomes better. But as long as the human beings living on earth keep living by their own convenience, their own pride, their own opinions — me, me, me — nature will hardly come into harmony, and the world of living creatures will go on being disturbed.

Did I speak of this the other day? The story of the bears appearing and causing trouble. Speaking only of this country, Japan: over a hundred years ago, the Meiji government said, 'Let us wipe the wolves out of this country,' and over several decades they drove the wolves to extinction. The Japanese wolf and the Ezo wolf — two kinds of wolves vanished from this country of Japan.

As a result, the deer multiplied enormously. The wild boars too, for that matter. And what did those deer do in the mountains and forests? They came to eat even the food the bears eat. So the bears, having no choice, began to come down to the villages in search of food. And when they came down to the villages, searching desperately for food, they were shot dead. This is the responsibility of human beings.

The principle by which earthquakes occur is the same. The purification of humanity's thought-vibrations; the movement to correct the distortions created by humanity's thought-vibrations. Yesterday or today, there was a magnitude 7.3 in southern Mexico. In sheer numbers of earthquakes, Japan and Indonesia have the most. I wish the earth would soon come into harmony, so that no one has to live trembling from the trauma of earthquakes.

In the end, when we consider what each one of us can do toward that, what we can do comes down to this: reviving our own divinity and living with it expressed in our words, thoughts, and deeds.

There are people who ask, 'How can I come to live that way?' and various people answer in various ways. Some say, 'Live with deep love.' Some say, 'Live like the gods and buddhas.' Some say, 'Live like the sun.' For someone who has never lived that way since coming into this world,

it all sounds rather hard to grasp.

Whatever form of divinity you express, the foundation on which you can actually carry it out is, I believe, a heart that can be grateful for anything — a heart of single-minded gratitude, a heart of total gratitude.

A person without this foundation cannot live with deep love, however much they try. The moment the other person does something they dislike, right after saying 'I love you,' they think 'I hate you' — only emotions that shallow can move in them. That is not love or anything like it. It is nothing but the squirming of karmic thoughts.

On the far side of like, there is dislike. On the far side of right, there is wrong. Anything that has an opposite is not a thing of the world of divinity. The love of the world of divinity is a love that never overturns. Even if the other person acts against your wishes, you can go on loving them.

In this imperfect world of today, when I wonder what love comes closest to that divine love, I think it is, after all, a mother's love.

Looking across the world today: Iran and America are still going at each other; Russia, too, cannot bring its raised fist down; China eyes parts of Taiwan's and the Philippines' territory with hungry intent; and there are various other ominous movements. But even so, we do not need to wear down our nerves worrying over it.

Whatever situations may appear along the way, a time will come, without fail, when everything harmonizes and all become friends. It will emerge out of movements beyond human knowing.

I have just spoken of the movements of several countries. All of these can be seen as phenomena in which the minus side of masculinity has tilted to the surface and appeared.

In the human spirit there are masculinity and femininity. And within masculinity and within femininity alike, there are plus and minus — yin and yang.

For example, to pick out a bit of the plus side of masculinity: the pioneering quality, taking on new challenges and expanding outward. Or, going back to primitive times, going outside to procure food and protecting one's wife and children so they can live. That part.

Femininity is, after all, giving birth, nurturing, protecting. We often call the earth 'Mother Earth' — we are the earth's children. We are descendants of the cosmic beings, and at the same time we are also children of the earth.

But we have been unfilial children — up to now. So now that we have realized how unfilial we have been, we are at the stage where we must show filial devotion to the earth.

Speaking in terms of masculinity and femininity, the negative side of masculinity — dominating, coming down from above, snatching what belongs to others — in short, when self-centeredness appears on the surface, that is what you get.

As for femininity's work of giving birth, nurturing, and protecting: when those feelings become twisted, there arise resentment, jealousy — the sticky, brooding movements of the heart.

The present world situation is a world being driven by the minus side of masculinity. The work of

harmonizing, of neutralizing this world driven by masculinity's minus side, is the work of the plus side of femininity.

This work of femininity's plus side does appear in some men too, but only in a few. If anything, those who express the good side of femininity are, after all, mostly women. In that sense, I believe the coming age will be the age of femininity.

The people who say 'Me, me!' 'I, I!' will be pushed out. But that is a matter of how they themselves take it. In reality, they are not pushed out — they are enfolded by the love of femininity. That is all.

Men are all children. The women will understand. However impressive a man may look, every man is a woman's child. Every man is born of a woman. There is no man ever born of a man.

So, returning to the initial subject of the revision of the Imperial House Law: they talk of 'male-line males' this and that — as if some element in the genes must be male-line male, and so on. But it is not, in fact, an unbroken single line — already, at this present point. And those who keep chanting 'male-line males, male-line males' find this inconvenient, so they shut their eyes and pretend not to see it.

But even these political movements are on the palm of God's hand. Like Son Goku on the palm of the Buddha — however far Son Goku thought he had gone, he was only moving on the Buddha's palm. That is the feel of it. There are those political movements now; things will proceed as decided; and in the future, trouble will arise again. What to do then — that is where it stands.

The inside stories of politics may be interesting, but there is little point in knowing them, I think. In conclusion: whatever movements may occur along the way, I believe the age of Empress Aiko will come. I do not doubt it in the least.

The television news — not only television; the newspapers too, and the internet news as well — news is always delivered with an intention on the part of those conveying it: 'We want you to see it this way, hear it this way, take it this way.' It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that there is no longer any news in this world that reports the bare facts alone.

So, when watching the news, judging only at the level of the surface movements of the world and the surface movements of your own emotions — this and that, like and dislike, what will become of it — that could not be helped until now. But from now on, it is good to watch while thinking, 'Ah, this news item wants me to think this way.'

Then, as you watch various news items, you will come to grasp the facts behind the way the news media intend to present them. Of course, that way of seeing also comes with the spiritual workings behind it.

We are now, each one of us, in the final, last spurt of the Divine Spark revival, and I believe you are all making good progress. So if you practice watching the news with the intuition that is connected to your own Guardian Spirits and Guardian Deities, you will cultivate a self that is not swayed by surface movements.

The time has now come to give up being human. There are people who say, 'I just can't seem to

give it up.' Such people should experience more of the trials and hardships of this world, be tossed and polished, experience it through to the end — and then come into the world of the Divine Spark revival.

Doing anything halfway is the worst of all, I believe. Whatever you do, do it in earnest. If you say, 'I haven't played enough yet,' then play in earnest. And whoever thinks, 'I've had enough of that. In the last part of my life, I will polish my soul and go to the other world,' should do just that.

People's ways of living differ, but truly, each person lives with their worries and their suffering. Whether or not, in the midst of that, one has the perspective that the human being is originally divine — that changes the future from there onward.

Among men especially, there are those who come to feel loneliness as they grow old. There are a few among the mothers as well. Especially a person who held a title in the days of their profession: when the title is gone and people around them no longer keep company with them the way they did when they had it, men feel their loneliness keenly. There are women like this too.

So, meddling a little, I will bring out a slide for such people. The higher up you go, the more important it becomes, so let's start from the bottom.

Number seven: without telling tales of your own exploits or hardships of the past, draw out the other person's present — let them do the talking.

Number six: not a good talker — become one who draws the other out, a good listener.

< The Seven Rules for Becoming a Well-Loved Elder >

- ① To everything, at every occasion, keep sending out and conveying feelings of gratitude**
- ② Make 'thanks to you' your habit of speech and give those around you the credit**
- ③ Begin speaking not with 'but' or 'no,' but with 'I see' or 'indeed'**
- ④ Aim to be the sun for the other person, not the north wind**
- ⑤ Do not preach or boast — always keep smiling warmly**
- ⑥ Aim to be a good listener, not a good talker**
- ⑦ Without telling of your exploits or past hardships, let the other person talk about their present**

Number five: without preaching or boasting, simply keep smiling warmly at all times.

Number four: take care to be the sun for the other person, not the north wind.

Number three: when you begin to speak, do not start from denial — 'but,' 'no' — but from words of affirmation: 'I see,' 'indeed.' This alone changes your human relationships considerably.

And number two: make 'thanks to you' a habit of speech, and always give the people around you the credit.

And the last, number one: to anything and everything, at every occasion, keep sending out and conveying feelings of gratitude.

This 'anything and everything' is not limited to people, is it. Water, air, the earth, our daily meals — there are countless objects of gratitude. Some people even say 'thank you' to the plants blooming through the cracks in the asphalt. Being grateful to the plants around town, too — when you make gratitude for everything your habit, everything goes well.

Number seven mentioned tales of exploits and past hardships. Men have that strong a need for recognition. They want to be told 'amazing'; they are children who want to be acknowledged. Remember a small boy: he wants to be praised by his mama. That spirit never changes. It is the same. At fifty-something, sixty-something, seventy-something, eighty-something, it does not change.

I too live in a man's body, and I certainly don't think it has nothing to do with me. There are moments when I think, 'Ah, yes, I do have that side.' But thankfully, a great deal of femininity has also entered into me, and I feel grateful that it neutralizes those tendencies.

In my old days of complaints and discontent, I lived on nothing but the minus side of masculinity. But I met my wife — and I truly believe it is thanks to her — I was raised, as it were, into harmonizing my heart. Of course, on my own will too, there was the thought, 'I must not go on living the way I have.'

So twenty years ago, fifteen years ago, ten years ago — those were the days when the fire was lit under me: 'Truly change. Change in earnest. I cannot stay as I am.'

Now that I have largely come out of it, I can tell it like a funny story. But at the time — as in any household, I suppose — there were periods when we clashed.

Yet, happily, we as a couple find that even after all these decades our feelings for each other have not cooled — we always say this to each other — and I am grateful for it. That my inner self was nurtured by her — she is not here today — is something I feel always, always.

So, for the men of the world too: if the power of femininity grows stronger, the men who say 'Me, me!' will quiet down, I believe. I experienced this change myself — I don't know if I should call it a track record — I have experienced being changed by the power of femininity. So I truly believe we need to nurture the 'me, me' men all over the world into holders of harmonized hearts.

Those who want war will wage it even if you say 'stop.' And yet one cannot say flatly that this is wrong. There is a side of it that is happening out of necessity. There are things that will not fade away unless they collide.

For example, even in personal relationships: people who have things they want to say but stay silent — this is common among women. If you keep doing that for decades — having things to say and staying silent — you will fall ill. Nine cases out of ten, you will fall ill.

If you recognize that tendency in yourself, then at the start it is fine to clash with those around you — say your opinion. This is not some shallow matter of 'going against harmony.' You are colliding as a necessary experience.

If you fear the collision, if you are afraid and do not say what you want to say, you end up killing yourself. So the very fact that today's world is in such a clatter is, seen rightly, a world in which humanity is giving one another the fading-away experiences necessary for coming into harmony. There is that way of seeing it.

Then how do we pray? 'May peace prevail on Earth. May peace be in our homes and countries. May our missions be accomplished.' Pray thus, and it is enough.

As for 'may our missions be accomplished' — I say this at the study sessions lately — it is not that a sick person recovering is what it means for the mission to be accomplished. There are people who fall ill, die just as they are, and thereby fulfill their mission. What constitutes the fulfillment of a mission, only the Guardian Spirits and Guardian Deities know. It is not something human beings can figure out with their shallow heads.

There is the saying, 'Trust in heaven's will and do all that is humanly possible.' If we trust in heaven's will, we need only do our human utmost. There is no need to speculate this way and that about the results, or to trouble our heads over them.

There is also the teaching, 'Entrust everything to the Guardian Spirits and Guardian Deities and live.' If you have entrusted it, then you do not complain about how things turn out. To complain is not to have entrusted. I have spoken before of 'becoming the carp on the cutting board': practice arriving at the feeling that however the Guardian Spirits and Guardian Deities may cook you, you are grateful.

It is the practice of emptying the ego, of erasing it. The thinner our ego becomes, the more our physical body becomes a vessel of the gods, which many gods and cosmic beings can enter and use.

In truth, those on the other side want more such people, but there are few on this earth. Everyone is thinking only of themselves. That time spent thinking of yourself — if the day is twenty-four hours and you sleep eight, then of the sixteen waking hours, how much do you think of the whole? How much do you live thinking of humanity's peace, humanity's happiness? Increase that proportion.

And the key to it — the heart of gratitude matters too, but at a more fundamental level — the most important element is breathing. We will now form the IN and take a break, and after the break I would like to talk about breathing and practice breathing together.

Now, before the break, let us form the Divine Spark IN once. Here we go.

< Divine Spark IN, once >

Thank you very much. Now then, we'll take a break until 2:13. Please turn off your video and take a break.

< Break >

Now then, let's move into the second half. Let's go into the talk on breathing.

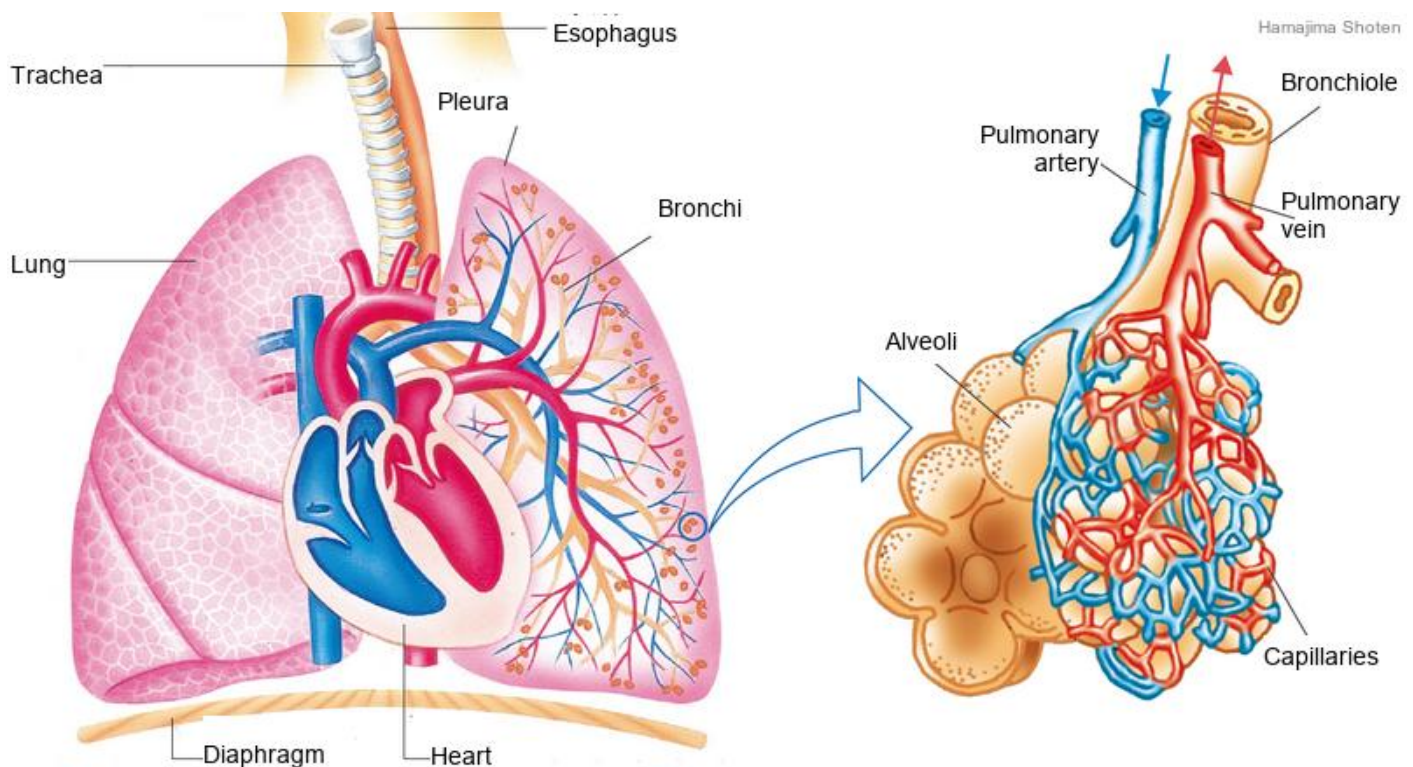
In the morning, you each may have your own routine of things you do upon rising. On the vertical part of the rib cage, the horizontal bones are attached. The base of each horizontal bone, where it joins the vertical bone, is cartilage — and this is the same on the back side as well.

While we sleep, the body moves little, so the joints of the sternum tend to stiffen in place. So when you wake in the morning, it is good to stroke here, like this. There is no need to press hard. Just stroke with the hand. Then it softens.

Some may ask, 'Why would it soften just from being touched?' But the human palm is a place from which the light of life pours out enormously — about as much as the eyeballs. That is why 'pain, pain, fly away' has been done since long ago, and why we even have the word 'laying on of hands.' The hand is that remarkable.

Some of you have known the hand is remarkable, and some perhaps not, but tremendous power lies hidden in the human hand. So merely touching with the fingertips softens the joints of the sternum and helps the expansion and contraction of breathing.

Once you have softened this area, next, breathe out all the air remaining in the lungs. Go 'whoo—,' and when you think nothing more will come, put more strength into your belly and push out 'whoo—,' and when you think you truly cannot, push on and breathe out 'whoo—' again. Do this several times, and the air that stayed at the bottom of the lungs all night, never getting out, goes out. And once it is out, fresh air enters all the way to the bottom of the lungs.



Then — I believe I once showed this in a diagram — in the lungs there are the alveoli, places like

clusters of grapes, and these alveoli are connected to the blood vessels. The oxygen taken in is passed into the blood within these alveoli, and as blood it carries oxygen through the whole body.

So if you breathe shallowly, unconsciously, the power to take in oxygen weakens, and the result is a state where oxygen does not reach throughout the body. This is the story on the side of the material, physical body.

Breathing shallowly, without slowing down, also has rather unfavorable effects on the mental side. What effects? People whose breathing is shallow — you will likely see it in those around you and in yourself — are easily swept by emotion, easily shaken, prone to slumping, prone to flaring up; their emotions are hard to govern.

If instead you practice keeping your breath always in a slow, easy rhythm, the mind becomes stable.

Why does the mind become stable? The human thought originally issues from the Universal God. But as this energy from the Universal God descends further and further into this world of coarse vibrations and enters the physical body, it has become a very hard, very unfree movement of thought.

It has become so through the erring thoughts that run from past lives down to this day. And where is that accumulated? In the astral body and the physical body — above all, what is in the astral body appears in the physical body.

So if you keep emitting thoughts of the kind that lead to illness, then though you are healthy at first, the seeds of illness pile up and up in the astral body, and like water overflowing a cup they flow into the physical body and damage the internal organs — the internal organs above all. In some people they damage the blood vessels. Then come cerebral infarctions and the like — blockages within the vessels.

If you live with the practice of always breathing slowly, your ties to such things fall away.

Breathing easefully all day long — this is also an act that brings the human breath closer to the breath of the source of life of the universe. By continuing this slow breathing, we naturally draw near the Universal God, and our spirituality draws near as well. And as the spirituality draws near the Universal God, the physical vibration in which that person dwells also becomes spiritualized.

Even without any effort, we are already living in bodies that are half like spirit bodies. But we are still half physical, so we remain partly subject to the laws of the physical world.

Human thought is invisible to the eye, but when thought comes down closest to this world, in most people it drifts, floating about, from around the pit of the stomach up to around the eyes.

Settle this drifting thought into the seika tanden — the point below the navel. Lower it into the seika tanden. By settling the center of thought into the seika tanden, we return to the state of living with the infinite power that life inherently possesses expressed in this physical body.

'Return' — I deliberately used the word 'return' just now, because the original human being was

such an existence. But for the sake of pioneering this earth, we descended into this physical world of the coarsest vibrations, and as we repeated birth and death, transmigrating again and again, almost all earth-humans forgot it.

But the time has come when we may remember. Or rather — unless we remember the true form of the human being, the earth will not hold much longer. That is the stage we have now entered.

That is why, not only among us but all over the world, people who have awakened to this truth of life are appearing — in many countries, in many regions. Their numbers may be small, but awakened people are now appearing all over the world.

And we, for our part, centering on the Prayer for World Peace, are working to bring forth the true powers that human beings possess — infinite wisdom, infinite creative power, infinite knowing — and to create a new age. At the very root of it all is slow, easeful breathing.

With shallow breathing, the Divine Spark revival cannot be achieved. Breathing slowly only while forming the IN does not, in the true sense, become the Divine Spark revival that lasts the whole time you are awake.

That is why I say — paradoxical as it sounds — 'More than the time we all pray together, more than the time we all form the IN together, the casual, ordinary moments of daily life matter more.'

Of course, the time we form the IN together matters, and the time we pray together matters. But in such times — you all know this from experience — anyone can pray properly, anyone can form the IN properly. Why? Because the power of the Guardian Spirits and Guardian Deities of all who have gathered comes together and watches over everyone present. That is why you can.

But once you enter daily life, with no praying companions around you, to keep up the consciousness of polishing and raising yourself is no ordinary feat.

Those who feel joy in it — so glad they can hardly contain it, finding it delightful and joyous to become finer, to polish and raise themselves — such people may not struggle much. But for many people, expressing divinity in the midst of daily living is the most difficult part. And the key that holds it is slow breathing.

Breathing — whatever you are thinking or not thinking, whatever you are doing or not doing — continues without cease. While you are awake and while you sleep, you are breathing.

The breathing while we sleep is controlled for us by the assistant Guardian Spirits and the guiding spirits. While we sleep, our consciousness goes with our Guardian Spirit to the other world; during that time, it is the assistant Guardian Spirits and the guiding spirits who protect the physical body. So there is no need to worry about the time we are asleep.

The problem is while we are awake. While we are awake, the authority over how we use our mind and body is entrusted to us. The Guardian Spirits and Guardian Deities, watching us day in and day out, do not force us, whatever they may think. They let us do as we wish.

In the midst of that, if you live concentrating on this one point of keeping the breath in order, you draw nearer, without knowing it, to becoming one with your Guardian Spirit and Guardian

Deity. Just by breathing slowly.

Why does such a thing happen? I spoke earlier of settling the drifting cluster of thought into the belly, into the seika tanden. It is because the seika tanden is the gateway, the portal, joining the other world and this world. When you keep your consciousness in the seika tanden, you are, without knowing it, in a state where it is easy to connect with your Guardian Spirits and Guardian Deities.

That state — we experience it now and then during meditation — is one in which the brain waves have become alpha waves, or the still finer theta waves. Even without meditating, simply breathing slowly brings this about.

And when we are in that state, we are connected with the universe. Connected with the great source of life. Connected with the direct spirit of the divine body. Connected with the Guardian Spirits and Guardian Deities.

There are people who live without breathing deeply and yet are spiritually sensitive. But the world such people are steeped in is the astral world. When you connect with the astral world, you become prone to being caught by all sorts of mistaken assumptions. That comes partly from the workings of the beings of the astral world, and partly from being driven by one's own subconscious. It does not mean that one spiritually understands anything by it.

And when we connect with the Guardian Spirits and Guardian Deities through breathing slowly like this, it is not that the invisible becomes visible or the inaudible becomes audible — you all know this already, I believe.

Seeing and hearing — when the time comes, anyone becomes so. When it is not needed, one simply is not so. That is all it is.

The power of telepathy, too, revives when it is needed. In some people the power of teleportation may revive. Some may become able to take objects out of the air. Some may walk on water. All sorts of things will become possible. But breathing slowly is not done with those as the aim.

Ultimately: Oneness with the Divine Self. Binding God and myself into one, and living with the vibration of the world of God expressed in this physical body. That is entirely different from being able to do something spiritually.

Living as an ordinary human being, what you do naturally accords with the will of God. What you do naturally gladdens people. What you say naturally helps someone. Not working the head over 'if I say it this way, that person will be pleased' — but a state in which life itself directly moves our mind and body. That is what we breathe slowly for. There was the term 'jinen-houni' — naturalness in accord with the Dharma. It becomes that state.

Of the actual method, I have so far given only two things. One: softening the sternum when you wake in the morning. As for the back, those who can reach it may do it, but you need not force it — if you soften the front, its movement stimulates the back and the back softens too, so there is no need to struggle with the back. Soften the sternum.

That is one. And the other: releasing the air that has collected at the bottom of the lungs during

sleep, the air that stays and does not go out. I recommend doing this not only upon waking but several times a day. I will not specify a number, but if you do it once every few hours, you will come to realize for yourself, 'So this is how much air I've been holding.'

When the breath turns shallow and you go huff-huff, huff-huff — with that rhythm the air does not reach the bottom of the lungs. Only the upper part of the lungs keeps taking in and letting out, and the air stored at the bottom stays for hours, tens of hours, days. Imagine the principle of a stream turning into a stagnant ditch: while a stream flows along murmuring, it is clean, but dam it up, and if the water has no way of escape, it turns into a stagnant ditch.

The same kind of thing happens inside the lungs. Stagnant air, dirty air, passes through the alveoli into the blood vessels and races through the whole body. So the lungs are really an organ best used to the full.

Of course, when you are running out of necessity, or in vigorous exercise, you cannot be breathing slowly. But in ordinary daily life apart from that, breathing is something you can do as you decide, once you decide to do it slowly.

'Even so, I try, but it doesn't last' — I sometimes hear people say. That is exactly why it is practice. With anything, if you practice — there may be faster and slower in improving — but every person improves. Anything improves with practice. Breathing is the same.

Decide for yourself to breathe in a slow, easy rhythm, and try. Then you find it doesn't last. So you collect yourself and start again. You repeat this earnestly. As you repeat it, the stretches in which you are breathing slowly grow longer.

Before you know it, a moment comes when you notice, 'Oh — I was breathing unconsciously just now, and it was slow.' That is the state in which slow breathing has become a habit. Once there, you have it made. You no longer need to practice breathing so hard.

'Do I breathe in through the nose and out through the nose?' 'In through the nose and out through the mouth?' Some people take an interest in such points. Do it whichever way seems best to you.

But one thing can be said clearly: from the standpoint of expelling the air in the lungs, breathing out through the mouth makes it easier to expel the air in the lower lungs. To push it all out through the nose, you must control the abdominal muscles skillfully. So if you mean to breathe in through the nose and out through the nose, you must do it accepting from the start that some air will remain at the bottom of the lungs.

So there is no need to be particular about it. Out through the nose, out through the mouth — case by case: 'This time through the nose,' 'this time through the mouth.' Choose for yourself, flexibly, as the situation asks.

For example, on the way to the supermarket, if you try, 'I wonder if I can slow my breathing a little,' nose-breathing is hard. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth.

As a breathing method — say you try slow breathing for five or ten minutes — you might do the chanted breathing: breathe in with 'Ware Soku Kami Nari,' hold, and breathe out with 'Jinrui Soku Kami Nari.' Or you may arrange it your own way: in through the nose, hold the breath, out

through the mouth. That is fine too.

At this year's SOPP there was the term 'shu-ha-ri.' First, the stage of keeping the basics — 'shu,' to keep. Then breaking them — 'ha.' Then the stage of working apart from them — 'ri,' to leave. By the time you reach that stage, your own way, your own form, is complete. You begin by imitating the master's form, make it your own, and as you work with it as your own, a form that is yours alone takes shape. That is shu-ha-ri. And I think it is the same with breathing.

At first you do as you were taught, and in time you find what suits you best — 'this is best for me.' That will differ from person to person. So there is no need for everyone to do it identically, like robots. Treasure the way you find best for yourself.

When we all practice together like this — 'let's practice breathing a little' — we set time frames: breathe in for five seconds, hold one or two, breathe out for five, and so on. But apart from such occasions, do it the way that seems best to you. Someone may think, 'No, not five seconds — seven is better.' Someone may think, 'I'll try fifteen.' Only, do it so that it does not strain your body. The important thing is to do it without straining the body.

Let me tell you my own story. When I was younger — nearly twenty years ago — there was a period when I was absorbed in breathing methods, and I would sit in a chair and test all kinds of them. For example: breathe in fully, and how long can I keep breathing out? How long a time can I spend exhaling? Or: breathe in deeply, and how long can I hold the breath? I did all sorts of experiments in those days.

I was still young then, and I suppose I was doing something reckless — several times I fainted. In the middle of it my consciousness would slide away, and sitting in a chair — an ordinary desk chair — I toppled straight backward, chair and all, and came to a little after. There was a time when I did such dangerous things.

That kind of dangerous experimenting, with no master present, is better not done much, I think.

Truly, conditions differ from person to person, so nothing can be said across the board. Some people have done yoga austerities and the like thoroughly in past lives. Watching such a person from the side, you may think, 'This person is being reckless,' while the person does not think so at all — and sometimes the onlooker is right that it is reckless. One cannot tell.

So, on the principle that you protect your own body yourself, I think it is good to make a promise to yourself: do not overdo it.

Greed creeps in, you see. 'More, more — a little longer.' It easily comes. But I think that for ordinary daily breathing to become slow, a pace of four or five seconds in and out is quite sufficient.

In short, if a breath about as long as when forming the Divine Spark IN continues all day, that is a stage worthy of applause. Most people are not there — two or three seconds, perhaps. If you can bring it up to about five seconds, truly nothing but good things will happen for heart and body alike. So I think it is good to combine the practice of slowing the breath with keeping the consciousness on 'thank you, thank you.'

Now then: breathe in for five seconds, out for five seconds — no holding in between for now —

and let's do it for a few minutes. First, slowly breathe out. Here we go.

Now, breathe out. In. Out. In. Out. — About this pace: five seconds, five seconds. In, out, in, out.

In taking up the practice of attentive breathing, the most basic thing I would like you to remember is this: not the order of in-then-out, but out first — out, in, out. Begin from the out-breath. Unless you breathe out, nothing comes in.

At the start I spoke of how, when the breath is shallow, air that never goes out collects at the bottom of the lungs. If you breathe out, empty the lungs, and begin from empty, you can draw in a great deal of breath and let out a great deal. Then the breath naturally lengthens. Keep that in a corner of your mind, and your everyday breathing will change.

Some people already take care to breathe slowly as a habit. But such people are, for the most part, formidable ones who trained at the foot of the Himalayas in past lives, and the like.

But in the age to come — without any such special past lives — anyone who breathes slowly and easefully can connect to the great source of life and express the essential human form called divinity. That is the age I want us to bring about from now on. So please give the practice a try.

Now, at the end, I would like to form the IN. We will form the Divine Spark IN three times in a row. The words are 'the great fulfillment of humanity's Divine Spark revival.' Those who find it hard on the body, please stay seated — no need to stand because everyone else is standing. Here we go.

< Divine Spark IN, three times in a row >

Thank you very much. Now then, I would like to bring today's study session to a close — and tonight, too, there is a program, isn't there. Tonight is the 'Day of Connecting as One,' is it.

Tonight's content — some of you may already have seen it in the announcement — is a program created inspired by Rika-sensei's talk of her experience at the recent 'Video Prayer Gathering.'

In what arises in this world, there is originally no such thing as imperfection or disharmony, anywhere. Everything is perfect. Everything is complete. In the words of Funai Yukio — what was it — 'inevitable, necessary, perfect,' was it? Books like that came out in the 2000s. Funai-san, I believe, had already entered by then the state of knowing that everything is perfect and there is nothing bad at all.

Tracing my memory of the 2000s, I believe I was thinking, 'Well, that's the ideal, though.' But now, entering the 2020s, I have gradually become better at seeing things in their essence, and the way of seeing — 'Everything is perfect. Nothing is lacking. Complete and full. Great fulfillment' — has gradually come to occupy the mainstream of my consciousness.

If more and more people — one, two, three at a time — come to see this earth's seemingly disharmonious situation as 'perfect: we are simply experiencing, moment to moment, an inevitable, necessary, perfect situation; everything is the fading-away form,' the more people see this way, the greater the force pushing forward the earth's evolution, I believe.

But this is not something anyone can be forced to do; it is something each person chooses and carries out by their own will. So I will say nothing more than that. Truly, these days I feel every day how much the earth is going through. Truly, the feeling is: 'Earth, I am sorry. And thank you.'

We pray for the earth's tectonic plates every morning and evening. Beneath the tectonic plates there is the mantle — the mantle being the part of seething magma — and further in, there is the part written 'outer core.' It is harder than the mantle, yet still seething. Within the outer core there is a swirling, rotating state of motion; and at the earth's innermost point, there is said to be a mass of iron called the inner core.

Through the study of seismic waves it is said, 'The innermost part of the earth is probably like this.' And this inner core, too, rotates — a mass of iron — separately from the earth's own rotation. The outer core also — being softer, with swirling rotation within it — when the balance of these is disturbed, it affects the outside of the earth.

The largest effect is on the geomagnetism: the magnetism goes awry. The south and north poles reversing — this has apparently happened several times in the earth's past. In this age we use satellites, car navigation and the like, so if the geomagnetism goes awry, the effects will be considerable. And it cannot be said that such a thing will not happen.

Further: the earth consists entirely of circulation. The air circulates, the sea circulates, the magma circulates — everything is made of circulation. And the ocean currents, too, are going wrong. In many places now, in ways for which humanity bears responsibility, the earth's movements are breaking down.

If we see it as 'necessary experience for the coming of a new and wonderful age,' it is not a problem in itself. But through such changes, humanity's heart panics and pollutes its surroundings, and that part in turn casts further harmful thought-influence upon the earth. The role of purifying that is the role we have been given.

Please take an interest in the earth's many aspects. Some say, 'If I watch the news I feel dark, so I don't watch.' Please become a person whose heart does not waver even watching the news.

For us to see is for the gods and the cosmic beings to see. The information of the earth that enters through our eyes and ears passes to the gods and the cosmic beings, and they grasp accurately: 'So this is the state of the earth now.'

People who become such vessels of the gods are much sought in this age. So let us erase the self — 'me' — empty it, enter the world of enlightenment, the world of Oneness with the Divine Self, and work together with God and the cosmic beings to protect this earth.

Now then, let us bring today's study session to a close. We've gone ten minutes over again, haven't we. Thank you very much. Well then, I'll turn on everyone's microphones.

< Bye-Bye Time >

Thank you very much. Thank you very much. The next session is scheduled for Saturday, August 1st. With this, we close. Thank you very much for today as well.

That's all.