

ATARIMAE is Not Normal

‘Things you have usually regarded as natural or *Atarimae* are not normal, they are precious,’ said a man who actually experienced The Great East Japan Earthquake. These words really moved me and actually changed my way of thinking.

Five years ago, when I was an elementary school student, that man came to our school to tell us how terrible that disaster was. This disaster occurred on March 11th, 2011, and it was one of the biggest earthquakes in Japan. Many people were killed and thousands of people were injured in this calamity. Also, many people were forced to evacuate to shelters and he was among them. Luckily, I had an opportunity to learn it from him.

In the lecture, he insisted again and again that *Atarimae* is not normal. He said that the people in the Tohoku region lost everything because of the earthquake, even their normal lives. For example, they ran desperately to escape from the danger, Tsunami. Actually, they were so desperate that they did not have peace of mind; all they could do was defend themselves. Many people lost their houses, belongings, and even their family. He also said they were forced to live without the things they used to use, such as electricity, gas, tap water, and so on. Those are things which we regard as *Atarimae*,

but without them, we cannot live comfortable and convenient lives. People cannot help feeling how lucky they were when they could do everything naturally. I found that things which we regarded as *Atarimae* are actually blessed and precious.

When I listened to his lecture, two points changed my view about my life. First, I got to understand what real happiness is for me. That is, I got to recognize that living a normal, ordinary life is lucky and happy. For instance, to live with my wonderful family, to have meals every day, to say “hi” to other people, and to live normally at this moment, all of these are pure happiness. This is also the point he told us. He said there were a lot of people who lost their family or friends, and they seemed to be at a loss and did not know what to do. There were people that had been chatting with a smile one second before the earthquake occurred, and passed away with the regret of not having done what they wanted to do. Taking it into consideration, I feel how precious *Atarimae* is. That is why I came to feel that I want to value the importance of *Atarimae*.

Second, I realized that it is important to help each other, which he also insisted. In other words, we owe what we are to the support of what other people do for us. To explain more concrete, without community, connections with others or a kindness of others, we cannot live a normal life since we do not have an ability to live all by ourselves, so I feel that I want to help people, not only been helped by other people.

Anyway, I have learned a lot of things from a person who actually experienced and felt the importance of *Atarimae*. It was a really nice and wonderful opportunity to look back on my life and have the chance to appreciate all the people that have done many things for me. I will never forget what I have learned from him and make my life better, by appreciating *Atarimae*.

575 words