

With the spirit of chanoyu

Iemoto of Omotesenke
Yuyusai Sen Sosa

I pray for the repose of the souls of those who have been taken from us by the novel coronavirus. I would also like to wish those who have contracted it the speediest possible recovery.

In addition, I would like to express my sincere respect and gratitude to those who are making such a great effort every day on the front lines of medical treatment and in support of our social infrastructure.

There is a saying, '*ichiza konryu*' (lit. 'building up a seated-as-one experience'). It came originally from Noh, but in *chanoyu* it means that the host and guests respect each other, and through their becoming one, a tea gathering is created.

Chanoyu is said to be a culture of hospitality and there is a tendency to see it as a one-way entertainment of the guests by the host. Actually the host who invites guests to a tea gathering does his best to entertain them. On the other hand, the guests sincerely accept the host's intention and pay him respect so that the minds of the host and guests are united.

Even though *chanoyu* is part of Japan's traditional culture, there is no 'artwork' produced as in *Ikebana* (flower arranging), nor is there a stage performance as in Noh or Kabuki. At a tea gathering, there is a role for the host to play and a role that the guests are expected to play and the 'artwork' and the 'performance' of *chanoyu* are created when the host and guests play their part together, creating a 'seated-as-one experience'.

What I have just said is about *sado* (the way of tea), but this is also a representation of society in miniature. Everyone, regardless of age or gender, has a role to play in society. Children should probably study and play hard, students should study and play sports and experience many things through hobbies and so on, deepen their knowledge and find out what path they should be taking in life through trial and error. When we become a member of society, each of us has a role to play at our workplace and in our family. It is through each person facing up to his or her responsibilities that society becomes a big '*ichiza*', or unified group.

Now, at this dangerous time of infection, what is required of us is to 'refrain from non-essential, non-urgent activities' and 'reduce our contact with others as much as possible'.

As the declared time of emergency is lengthened, a difficult road lies ahead for people from all walks of life, but I believe that if each of us fulfills the role they should play and if we support each other, we can begin to control this situation and in the end our normal lives will be restored.

I pray that our ordinary life will return as soon as possible and I want to feel the happiness of being able to enjoy a cup of tea when this happens.

May 4th, 2020