

## One Liter of Tears and a Bowl of Green Juice

by Takamatsu Bunzo

Spinocerebellar degeneration is a rare disease that afflicts one in 100,000 people. Part of the central nervous system—such as the cerebellum and brain stem that control coordination, muscle movement, and some sensory function—gradually wear away. Though progression of symptoms is slow, death occurs in 5 to 10 years if the disease is contracted at an early age. Symptoms progress with frequent falling, an inability to stand, and eventually loss of bodily movements including those of the mouth. Since the cerebrum is intact, the patient is aware of everything happening, making the condition more unbearable. This disease became well known in Japan after the book *One Liter of Tears* was made into a film and then a TV drama.

Aya Kito was diagnosed with spinocerebellar degeneration when she was in 9th grade and died about 10 years later. *One Liter of Tears* is basically based on her diary. It was her mother's "answer" to Aya's cry, "What was I born for?" She suffered a long, cruel bout with a deadly disease, yet the book about her journey has sold over two million copies. The book was literally a tear jerker, but at the same time it made people appreciate their relative health and encouragement them to live life more fully.

Michiyo Mori was born in 1962, the same year Aya was born, and was diagnosed with the same disease when she was 21 years old. Michiyo knew there was something wrong when she started falling: she went to see a doctor, but was told there was nothing wrong. Eventually she went to see a specialist, got a CT scan, and was diagnosed with this disease. She was told there was no cure.

She had just started a job as a school nurse. She had become a nurse because her dear aunt was also a school nurse. When she was a high school student, her aunt took her to a lecture by Mitsuo Koda MD, who had been using fasting then as a main treatment in his hospital for over 50 years. Michiyo was introduced to semi-fasting at that time, and she had also had a hunch that this would be the place to come if anything serious happened. Remembering this, she went to see Dr. Koda and asked his opinion. After abdominal diagnosis, he said, "Do fasting, and you'll be cured." It didn't take her long to decide to do whatever she was told by Dr. Koda: he gave her hope even if it was slim, whereas so-called specialists gave her none. There was a big difference between some hope and none.

Michiyo continued to work as long as possible and did short-term fasts at Dr. Koda's hospital whenever she could. She felt better after the fast, but as soon as she started eating her condition worsened. Finally the time had come that she could no longer work and focused just on healing. The key to complete recovery was a long term fast. She challenged herself to a 24-day fast at first. During this fast she got worse and was unable to keep standing, so she had to crawl to get around. She couldn't help but have doubts about what she was doing during this time. When it was finished, though, her condition was definitely better. She still had a problem with equilibrium but overall felt much better than when she started.

Dr. Koda's plan was to have her do another long-term fast and then a raw-vegetable/brown-rice diet afterward. Two months after the first fast, Michiyo tried the second fast without fully recovering from the first one. This time she did better than during the first one and her equilibrium improved tremendously. She stopped the fasting on the 20th day at Dr. Koda's suggestion. After this fast, she started gaining weight very quickly even though she was taking in far fewer calories than her basal metabolism consumed. In fact, she was gaining so quickly that she had to adjust her caloric intake and eventually ended up with one bowl of green juice (60 kcal) per day. Ever since then she has been having only a bowl of green juice per day, and it has been over 15 years now. The disease is totally gone, and she gained something else: the ability to see auras around people and even around plants. She realized her healing power and eventually became an acupuncturist.

What do we live by? The *Bible* says, "Man shall not live by bread alone." The example of Michiyo makes this saying more credible. The *Bible* follows, "but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." It sounds like something invisible and ever powerful and divine. It could be translated into cosmic love or God's love, because it is poured on everybody without exception. One is very happy if one can feel that love in daily life. Often we are given the chance to realize the existence of it through accidents or serious diseases. Usually we are too busy to feel it. Another way to feel this love is to put oneself in an extra-ordinary situation. Fasting is a good example. That the inner healing power awakens while fasting shows that God's love is poured on everybody. If difficult diseases such as spinocerebellar degeneration were cured only by very expensive treatments, or only those people who met certain requirements were cured, God's love would not be universal. If it's exclusive, it's no longer God's love. Anyone can fast, no matter how poor he is and no matter where he lives. Cosmic love or God's love reserves fasting as a last resort for everyone equally.

To me both Aya Kito and Michiyo Mori are Bodhisattvas who have come here to teach us. Aya taught us the miracle of daily life through her death. Michiyo taught us the presence of Cosmic love through her life.

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