**Chapter 9　What does it mean to work?**

Living in Fiji, I often feel that everyone is truly enjoying life. In Fiji, there aren't really any kind of real 'jobs' so to say. Therefore, there are many who do not work to live their entire life. But if you include those who are 'making money with their hobbies' in the working force population, then it could be said that Fijians all have some kind of jobs.

When driving down a street in a car, I often see people standing on the side with fish and shrimps.

They do not have any base to lay down the fish nor do they have any shades to keep the strong sunlight from shining directly down on the fish. They just stand there in the open area, swinging the fish in their hands side to side to appeal "Fresh catch!" to cars driving by.

There are vegetable markets and fish markets in Fiji, but people typically buy fish sold on the streets. Most likely from Christian influence, Fijians often cook fish on weekends, so on Fridays and Saturdays, I often see people that drove by buying these fish.

I also often buy fish. It is quite an emotional moment to see a parent and his/her children from the other side of the sugarcane field, running up to me on the side of the road fluttering their big fish.

I am not sure if its proper to call them fishermen. I am not sure if they are properly paying taxes. Putting that aside, they have pride in their work. They sing and dance when someone praises them for the fish they have caught. Just watching them jump for joy makes me happy too.

When they are praised about their catch, they start boasting about where and how they caught the fish, even if I didn't ask them about it. I like fishing myself, so I love to hear these brag stories.

Indeed, having pride in your work is such a joyous state.

I can't resist comparing them with the staff of the fresh fish corner in Japan's supermarkets. While I live in Tokyo, I have struck up conversations with them on several occasions, but some do not even know the name of the fish they are selling. It doesn't matter to them whether the fish tasted good or not. They do not react much if I praise the fish the next day.

When I attended university in China, I would sometimes see a three-wheeler taxi. Among the three-wheeler taxis, some vehicles could be controlled, its accelerators, brakes, etc. with just hands. I have seen taxi drivers who had lost both his legs for some reason driving around, doing his work and properly paying taxes.

I was touched to see that when this driver goes home after work, residents living in the same apartment helped him onto a wheelchair-like pedestal.

In comparison, people of similar circumstances in Japan are not able to actively participate in society. There are many who feel sorry for making such people work. To me, the taxi driver without legs seemed proud to come home after a day's work.

Some people talk about work like it is a hardship, but I think it is wonderful to work for someone in society. To me, someone deprived of that wonderful opportunity seems ill-fated.

There are many reverent Christians in Fiji, and everyone is kind to others. If you ask a stranger for directions, not only will they tell you the way, but they will go with you to your destination. They always seem delighted from the bottom of their hearts that they were able to do a good deed of showing you the way.

In the Fijian language, "Vinaka" means "Thank you" but is also used as "You're welcome." In other words, when one says, "Thank you" the other returns "Thank you."

Like any parts of the world, there are many people with disabilities in Japan. But most of them are concerned about their disabilities that they don't bother thinking about traveling overseas or studying abroad. In fact, there are hardly any inquiries to our school from people with disabilities.

Fiji is definitely not a convenient country. Our school is not barrier free. But if you saw those living around our school and those working at our school, you would not think that they will pass by ignoring someone in a wheelchair. Surely, they will help push the wheelchair, carry them on their backs, or chat with them all day long. I am most certain about it.

Now I had another new idea I wanted to try. That is, to start an international language study course for people with disabilities at Fiji's language school. (For the time being, it will be limited to wheelchair users.)

When I discussed this with my employees, I was asked how I was going to manage construction cost to make the school barrier-free. I answered with,

"They won't come to Fiji expecting everything to be like Japan!"

Thus, our "Wheelchair Study Abroad" program started with no additional facility investment, only with pure passion and kindness.