Random Thoughts 61

# Happy New Year!

I hope you had a restful and pleasant New Year’s holiday! I know that here in Japan it is the custom for many people to return to their hometown areas to spend time with relatives, some whom they have not seen in a long time, and for others to travel abroad. With so many people traveling during the end and beginning of the year, roads, trains, and airplanes are all fully booked and crowded. It is also a time for eating traditional dishes, namely *osechi* (御節料理), soba, and udon. Visiting a shrine or temple on New Year’s Eve or New Year’s Day is also a common practice for many. News programs show great throngs of people visiting famous sites to make New Year wishes.

This is a time also when we look back on the old year and look forward to the new year. In America many people make New Year resolutions which are intentions to improve themselves in some way. More often than not, the resolutions are forgotten in a few days and people go back to their normal routines.

As for me, I spent the holidays quietly at home, though I did attend one end-of-the-year party which was very nice. Before the end of the year I managed to complete translation work, so there was nothing for me to do but just relax. This I did by “binge watching” Agatha Christie mysteries on TV. I enjoy these BBC productions because the acting is superb and great attention is paid to the sets which authentically portray English cities and countryside as they must have looked in the 1920s and 1930s. Watching these, though, I am struck by how vertical English society was then, where those of “high birth”, that is to say, born into aristocratic or wealthy families, lived and how, despite their material wealth, seemed to live rather shallow lives seduced by their own sense of superiority. While such a life of great wealth and comfort might look enticing at first, I don’t think I would adjust well to all the unwritten rules of behavior and thinking that goes with it. I have always preferred a freer, unfettered lifestyle.

The holidays were a time of relaxation for me and I did have much time to think. I reflected on the old year and felt grateful for it being overall a good one for me in spite of some expensive dental issues. I feel blessed by new friendships made through my seminars and grateful for all the assistance I had throughout the year. Seeing the plight of others, such as the homeless and others in distress, also made me grateful for what I have and not dissatisfied or unhappy about what I don’t have. As for the New Year, I shall endeavor to do my best not only for myself but others, too, and shall try to remain positive, cheerful, and grateful at all times.

I like the Japanese expression 今年もよろしくお願いします and shall use that to close this blog entry!