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Work, Work, Work...?

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Japanese are diligent people. We can be proud of this nationality. Ironically, however, they are so diligent that they are working too much. Their diligence can put them to the limit, ruining their health.

Once there was a sixty-something, diligent gentleman. He was working at a company as a night-shift security, because his income as a farmer was unstable. He went to work in the morning and came back to home in the next morning. No wonder he impaired his health. He had longed to quit his job for some years, but he couldn't because it was difficult to find replacement. Unfortunately, it was only a month before he passed away due to a car accident. It seemed to be caused by his fatigue.

This story is about my beloved grandpa. When I visited him last year, I felt really sorry for him who looked exhausted. I imagined how hard his work was. Even though I was younger than him, I thought I cannot work around the clock. That was when I recognized Japan's harsh working condition, including night-shift and overworking.

In Japan, overworking is an underlying problem. Recently, "Karoushi", an overwork death, and overwork-related suicide have come to the surface. But what I want to tell you is that overwork death is only a small part of the problem. In Japan, three-fourths of junior-high school teacher overwork for over 80 hours every month, if their in-home overwork is considered. They exceed a standard of "overwork death". More than 70% of Japanese nurse always feel fatigued and want to quit their jobs.

What causes overwork? Japanese diligence? To some extent, yes. Actually, it creates two types of Japanese general mood: "Overwork is conventional, common practice and it is regarded as dedication to work." I recognized this fact when I realized that an ALT leaves work on time. I was a bit surprised, but at the same time, I found that I myself had taken Japanese teachers overworking for granted.

To be honest, my mother kept me when I told her about telling my grandfather's story, saying, "Some people work under harsh working conditions because of the social need as well as financial reason. You can't fuss about the adult world." –I all the more pose a question about this overworking issue, which has been taken for granted.

Now it's time to reconsider our working style and to pursue the ideal lifestyle. For example, as for schools, how about dividing conventional teachers' tasks and create a new post of specialized occupation? Let's follow Finland and the U.S., where a school counsellor offers career guidance and a specialized coach takes care of the school sport team. Or how about developing AI to replace conventional oppressive night-shift, such as a nurse and a convenience-store clerk? Cooperation and the assistance of AI will surely reduce the burden on people overwhelmed with current harsh working condition. So let's become a bit "lazier." Let's leave some work to technology, and share some work. The more efficiently we work, the more we can enjoy our limited time.

This year, nobody dropped in at my house with cherries or grapes from his farm to be shared. I remembered deeply about my grandpa. The deceased never come back, but it's not too late to change our mind before we die from overwork. My grandpa's story made me think how work should be as a part of our life. Nothing is more important than our lives and "ordinary life." How should we work? How should we live? Now it's time to live for the sake of ourselves.