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## Turn to God in time of need

I visited a shrine in my birthplace on the early morning of New Year's Day this year. I did not remember its origin, who is deified or what is worshipped or anything about it because I was there for the first time in many years. However, somehow I went to the shrine where my feet directed me.

The shrine has become quite old, but I thanked it for enabling my family members to live in safety for the past one year and prayed for our continued security. That was what I usually did when I visited a shrine on New Year's Day. But I had more wishes, expecting a special benefit this year.

My particular wish was "not to destroy homes of polar bears." However, I realized after saying a prayer that I put my family's safety first after all.

It was probable that as it listened to my prayer, the shrine's god was disappointed and thought I was a self-centered and avaricious person. He also may have thought we would not be safe at all when the white bears lost their homes.

In our home, we have a car, a *kotatsu* portable foot warmer (a quilt-covered table with an electric heater underneath), a kerosene fan heater, a microwave oven, a refrigerator and a washing machine – all the things that are indispensable for daily life. The god would not listen to us living in such a convenient environment praying for the safety of polar bears without sacrificing our lifestyle.

If that is the case, there will be no other way for us except to ask for help from leaders of industrial nations scheduled to meet at a Lake Toya hotel in Hokkaido this year, although they might not be as beneficial as gods. I sincerely wish them to resort to the collective wisdom of the people of the world and have fruitful talks to keep the homes of the polar bears from destruction and protect the precious environment of the globe.

JS

