

Let Us Enjoy the “24-Year Cycle of Life”

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This is an idea I have been contemplating for several years, and now that I have reached my seventy-seventh year, I feel it more strongly than ever. I would like to share these thoughts with you.

Plants bloom, bear fruit, shed their leaves, and are reborn again a year later. Crabs and shrimp repeatedly molt, growing and renewing themselves in the process. What about human beings? While we do not undergo such dramatic physical or biological transformations, it seems to me that our lives are marked by cycles—periodic turning points at which we renew ourselves.

Traditionally, the twelve-year zodiac cycle has served as a basic unit of time, with five such cycles—sixty years—culminating in *kanreki*, the sixtieth birthday. However, I sense that a deeper, more fundamental rhythm in human life lies in a **twenty-four-year cycle**. This is what I call the “24-Year Cycle of Life.”

From birth to age twenty-four constitutes the first stage (up to independence). Ages twenty-four to forty-eight form the second stage (a period of growth and active engagement). Ages forty-eight to seventy-two make up the third stage (the second active period). Ages seventy-two to ninety-six are the fourth stage (the third active period), and ages ninety-six to one hundred twenty constitute the fifth stage (the fourth active period). The end of the fifth stage corresponds roughly to the current maximum human lifespan in the world. We ourselves are now in the fourth stage, between seventy-two and ninety-six.

Based on the idea of renewal, I think of each stage as ending with a return to the age of twenty-four—a rebirth, so to speak. Accordingly, even after retirement, I continue to enjoy my research life by using an office at the Research Institute for Mathematical Sciences, thinking of myself as a young researcher in my late twenties.

One important aspect of the “24-Year Cycle of Life” is this: after each return and renewal, one should regard past achievements as belonging to one’s **senior (the former self)**. As a **junior (the new self)**, there is no need to be concerned with them. This way of thinking frees us from being bound by the past, lightens the mind, and grants a sense of freedom. It allows us to enjoy both research and life itself without being preoccupied with age.

While the individual undergoes cycles of return and renewal, memory fortunately continues. Therefore, to all of you who are reading this, let us stay healthy, enjoy our lives, meet again, and share fond memories together.

With prayers for world peace, I wish you all continued good health.

(On the occasion of the Alumni Meeting of Iwakuni High School held in June 2024)
(This is a translation of an essay written in Japanese, using free ChatGPT in January 2026.)