

# Shinto Core Beliefs and Practices

## **Core Beliefs**

Shintoism holds the belief in gods or spirits called *kami* who can manifest in many different polytheistic forms and who have creating and harmonizing powers. It also holds the belief that '*man in kami's child*'. This is a very positive view on human nature which makes Shintoism quite unusual amongst other religions. Followers of the Shinto religion are encouraged by this belief to give basic human rights to others as well as their own. Finally Shintoism is founded on a society which views each individual being as a continuation of an ever-changing human world.

Aside from their beliefs in the *kami*, Shinto followers focus more on an overall perspective of life and the world rather than a straightforward list of beliefs. Shintoism involves a perspective of *mono no aware* - way of seeing the world for its immense beauty which contains many nuances includes

- *Aesthetic sensitivity - a sense of beauty and of the beautiful*
  
- *Sensitivity toward the aesthetic and the emotional as a basis for looking at life - this includes the sadness or pathos of life as well as joy, happiness and bliss*
  
- *Seeing with the heart into the natural beauty and goodness of all things*

## **Practices**

The followers of the Shinto religion have two shrines in their home – one for Shinto (used for worshipping their tutelary kami and the goddess Amaterasu) and one for Buddhism (used for worshipping their ancestors). The shrines can have a gateway, *torii*, where the person washes their hands and rinses their mouths before entering. Shinto followers have no set times for worship but some may choose to worship on the first and the fifteenth of every month. There are some fixed times that the Shinto follower will enter these shrines – they are the times of the festivals which happen every year. These festivals are:

- Spring Festival (Haru Matsuri or Toshigoi-no-Matsuri),
- Autumn or Harvest Festival (Aki Matsuri, or Niiname-sai),
- Annual Festival (Rei-sai), and the Divine Procession (Shinko-sai).



*Shinto Kami*

*Shinto Shrine*

