

All Different, All Just Right  
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I'd like to introduce one Japanese poetess. Her name is Misuzu Kaneko. She was from Nagato City, Yamaguchi, Japan where I was born. She lived in Japan and died young at the age of 26 about 80 years ago. However, she wrote 512 poems until then. She was born and raised in the family who followed the teaching of Nembutsu. It is said that she always attended temple services. Therefore, she sometimes wrote poems about the Buddha's heart and temple events. Also, many of her poems include warm and kind words. I would like to share one of her poems titled "Me, a Songbird, and a Bell"

Spread my arms though I may I'll never fly up in the sky. Songbirds fly but they can't run fast on the ground like I do. Shake myself though I may no pretty sound comes out. Bells jingle but they don't know lots of songs like I do. Bell, songbird, and me all different, all just right.

This is a short and simple poem, but we would learn an important lesson from this poem. In our daily lives, we may compare people. We would think "Oh, I prefer this person to that person." or "This person is nicer than that person." In addition, we may sometimes compare ourselves to others. For example, we may think, "I'm a better person than him, because I made a big success." On the contrary, we may think "Oh, he has a good talent, compared with myself," "I don't know why she always looks happy. Her life seems to be better than mine." Have you ever had this kind of thought? If we always think like this, it would be hard to see good in others. Also, it would be hard to accept ourselves as we are.

Misuzu Kaneko talked about bell, songbird and herself, and then she said, "All different, all just right." Actually, it would be hard for us to always accept all differences, because of our self-centered viewpoint. However, through her poem, we would be reminded that all life is precious and great as it is. When I read this poem, I always remember one passage of Amida Sutra: **In the ponds are lotuses as large as chariot-wheels – the blue ones radiating a blue light, the yellow a yellow light, the red a red light, and the white a white light. They are marvelous and beautiful, fragrant and pure. The Land of Utmost Bliss is filled with such splendid adornments.**

(Amida Sutra: *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, p. 354)

In the Buddha's world, there are many lotuses of different colors. Each flower radiates each color and shines each other. The sutra says that they are marvelous and beautiful, fragrant and pure. Like the colors of lotuses, we are all different. Since we are all different, we would radiate our own color of light and shine each other.

If we could have a perfect viewpoint, our mind would be peaceful all the time. However, we see things with our own viewpoint, then we are sometimes bothered. However, Amida Buddha is far beyond our viewpoint which exceeds all measure. According to his point of view, we are all constantly illuminated by Amida Buddha's light, and this means that everything shines all the time. The poem "Me, a Songbird, and a Bell" would remind us of this matter.

Shinran Shonin said: **The light of wisdom exceeds all measure and every finite living being receives this illumination that is like the dawn, so take refuge in Amida, the true and real light.**

(Hymns of the Pure Land: *Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 325)

Let us live our daily lives, listening to the teaching of Nembutsu. Namo Amida Butsu.