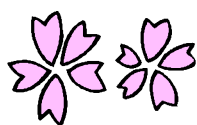


The Copy-cat tendency of the Japanese (YOKONARABI), and the principle of cherry, plum, peach and apricot.

The season is changing day by day and month after month. After the plum flowers, cherry flowers became full in bloom. Then the flower of peach and apricot are now in full bloom. The spring season is now at its prime time.



By the way, I heard that the book, “The collection of jokes about Japanese in the world” is selling well. I don’t know any nation other than Japan that has such a strong interest about “How are we being appreciated in the world”. Actually, there are so many ironic jokes about the Japanese. Some of them are, in one sense critical of the Japanese. But most of the Japanese accept these criticisms as if they were, in some ways, accurate.

I like jokes too, very much. When I was a correspondent of the Seikyo Shimbun in Latin America, I would exchange jokes with my intimate friends when I took lunch or dinner with them. I felt that people in Latin America were basically fond of joking. Because, when I mentioned some jokes, they would add some more interesting remarks to my words or they would create a totally new joke based upon my story.

Anyway, their jokes were interesting and made me laugh. Some of the stories that they related to are cited in this book.

Now, let me introduce you the two jokes that were accepted well when I presented in Latin American countries.

Joke about the Japanese No.1

One day, a ship crossing an ocean sank. The passengers abandoned ship. They swam toward an island far ahead. The condition of the sea was tough and only three passengers were able to reach the island. These were two men and a young woman.

Now here comes a question posed to a group of men from around the globe: “What do you think these two men would do to the woman on the island?”

The answers are as follow:

French men: One became her husband and another one became her lover.

English men: To our great surprise, these two men began to love each other, leaving her alone.

Italian men: They began to duel to get her in his hand.

What if these two men were Japanese?

Japanese men: Both of them went out in haste to find a telephone. They intended to call their head office in Tokyo and ask their boss how to treat this young woman.



Joke about Japanese No. 2

The steamer “Titanic” was going to sink into the ocean. All the passengers desperately tried to get on the lifeboat for emergency. Turmoil was almost going to happen on the deck of the steamer. At that moment, the captain began to persuade the male passengers to give priority to women and children for the rescue boat.

First of all, the captain said to the American:

“Don’t you want to become a hero?”

Secondly, to the English man:

“You are an authentic English gentleman, aren’t you?”

Thirdly, to the German:

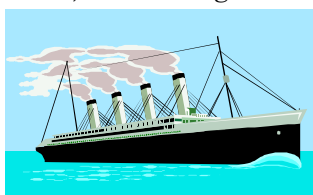
“The law of your country states clearly how you should behave!”

Lastly he said to the Japanese:

“I think you had better do as the others do.”

Just like the above example, Japanese has a tendency to copy others or do the same as the others do. They put too much concerns to how the people around them will look at them. They are afraid to go one step ahead of others. They like YOKONARABI : being at the same level as the horizon, and do as others do.

The former episode intends to laugh at the tendency of Japanese who work for a company. He would ask to get an indication from his boss even about a private matter, something like how to handle a woman.



The latter episode shows that Japanese feel comfortable as long as they are acting the same as others. Both of these episodes make fun of the debility of identity

as a human being. These tendencies are likened to the “YOKONARABI culture” and to a noted saying, “There is no fear in crossing a traffic road even at red signal if we cross it altogether.”

Under such circumstance, we can remember a noted old saying that fits exactly to this season. That is:

“The principle of cherry, plum, peach and apricot.” This means that the cherry tree blooms cherry blossoms. The plum tree blooms plum blossoms. The peach tree blooms peach blossoms. And the apricot tree blooms apricot blossoms. Each blooms to fullest and brings out their respective authentic beauty. I believe this can be applied to the world of human beings.

Don’t envy others. Don’t try to do anything beyond your ability. Let’s try to live naturally as we are. Then, I think, a harmonious and beautiful life will be opened to us. Even though we can become beautiful by using cosmetics, it is impossible for us to shine our life itself.

In these days, we see so many people whose hearts are wretched seeking after money, position, honor or a desire to become equal to the people around them, and through such a way of living, ruin their life eventually.

Let’s keep our self identity and advance toward the future, developing a spirit, “Today, I myself will make a better life than yesterday’s”. Then I think, only then we may enjoy a fuller and happier life.