

# A PERSON AS SMALL AS A VIOLET



## SOSEKI'S POEM AND SHAKYAMUNI'S BIRTH DECLARATION

〈In 1897, the novelist  
 Soseki Natsume〉

〈It is important  
 for people〉

〈Misunderstanding this,  
 though,〉

〈Faced with that reality,〉

sent his close friend, Shiki  
 Masaoka, this haiku:

“Born as small as a violet, /  
 Such a humble person.”

this poem seems to exude a  
 sentiment akin to sadness  
 on Soseki's part.

to value their  
 own  
 individuality  
 and live with  
 pride.

can lead to arrogance—  
 such as being overly proud  
 of yourself or intimidating  
 other people—

and at times, even spread  
 the dangerous mood  
 among people everywhere  
 that war is acceptable.

I feel that Soseki's poem is  
 imbued with the wish to be like  
 a roadside violet that blooms  
 quietly, lives vigorously but  
 inconspicuously, and is a  
 presence that comforts and  
 soothes the minds of those who  
 happen to see it.

〈The birth of Shakyamuni〉

〈Each and every person〉

〈At the same time,〉

〈Instead of trying to be  
 “big shots”〉

“I alone am honored, in  
 heaven and on earth,”  
 which he is said to have  
 uttered shortly after his  
 birth.

This declaration can be  
 interpreted as teaching us  
 the importance of the  
 humility and introspection  
 that comport with the  
 sentiments of Soseki's  
 poem, as well as true  
 respect for oneself and  
 others.

has a life that is  
 precious and  
 unique in this  
 world.

When we realize  
 this, we  
 understand how  
 foolish it is to  
 feverishly pursue  
 wild ambitions or  
 argue and fight  
 with others.

by respecting oneself and  
 others—in other words,  
 living in harmony with  
 everyone—)

we come to better  
 understand the meaning of  
 being born as a human being

and why we are taught that  
 the mind of gratitude and  
 compassion is more  
 important than anything else.

and lead a self-  
 satisfied lifestyle,

we will be much  
 happier if, for  
 instance, we bring  
 peace to the minds of  
 other people and build  
 harmony around us,  
 even if we might be  
 unassuming, “small  
 persons.”

## THE MEANING OF HAVING BEEN BORN

〈Soseki chose the violet,〉

〈Someone once stated that〉

〈Philosopher Kitaro Nishida〉

〈For those of us who study〉

but what kind of  
 flower would you  
 choose to be like?

Magnolias, cherry  
 blossoms, and  
 dandelions or  
 daphne?

“there is no ranking the  
 beauty of flowers.”

and surely there are  
 no distinctions, such as  
 superior, inferior, pretty,  
 or ugly, that apply to the  
 way every kind of flower  
 does its part to bloom as  
 best it can.

said, “Just as flowers  
 are most beautiful  
 when they reveal their  
 true nature, human  
 beings reach the  
 pinnacle of their  
 beauty when they  
 reveal their true  
 nature.”

and live by the Buddha's teachings,  
 true human nature is none other  
 than buddha nature, and when we  
 all realize this and manifest our  
 buddha nature, our lives will  
 become like those of flowers, and  
 we will be doing our part as best we  
 can. Therein lies the great meaning  
 of having been born as human  
 beings.

↓ 〈However〉

the time at which we become aware of the meaning of life varies  
 from person to person, and young people in particular should not be  
 impatient or pessimistic.

〈Buddhist poems |  
 Sazen Sekkai〉

“In this world, /  
 Live however you  
 can, / Just stay true  
 to focusing your  
 mind on goodness”

This poem means that you  
 should put your mind at  
 ease; reduce your desires,  
 worries, and anger; and  
 always be true to yourself.

We should maintain this attitude and never forget to  
 put others first, especially in an era of growing anxiety  
 and discontent. This will allow all of us to bloom  
 splendidly as unique individuals.