

<Japanese Proverbs> —*Sumeba miyako* (“Wherever you live, you will come to love it”)—

Let’s imagine that, due to various circumstances, a certain person has no choice but to leave the place where he has lived up to that point, and move to another place that he does not know at all. In his new home, he has no family or friends to rely on. Moreover, his new home is not as sophisticated as the town he lived in previously, and the climate and language are completely different. At first, because of his loneliness and the inconvenience of life in the new place, the man is unable to think positively and attempt to get used to his new environment. However, eventually he will create a comfortable space for himself in his new house, he will find places to enjoy himself in his neighborhood, and he will make new friends. As time passes, the place where he now lives will become very comfortable to him – that is, it will become the *miyako* (“capital”).

This idea, that if you get used to living in a place, no matter where it might be, it will come to seem the most comfortable place to you, is expressed by the proverb “*Sumeba miyako*.” A *miyako* is normally the capital city of a country, or at least a large city, a place with a large population that is central in every respect—politically, economically, culturally, etc. Historically speaking, many places outside the capital were isolated and inconvenient, and so the capital was the preferred place for people to live. The proverb, though, is “*Sumeba miyako*,” (“Wherever you live, it will become the capital,” i.e. you will come to love it), not “*Sumu nara miyako*,” (“The capital is the place to live”).

So, how does our hypothetical man mentioned above come to feel that where he lives is the “*miyakō*”? The key is to possess an adaptability that enables one to accept unknown things and enjoy them as if they were things that are well known to one. Being curious and inquisitive without being afraid. The process of coming to know something that was previously unknown to you is one that helps you to grow as a person.

What you have to do to live comfortably in any place you are at—to make that place your “*miyakō*”—is to make active efforts to find, or to create for yourself, things that will give you a feeling of affection for the place. It’s a good idea to live at all times as if “*Sumeba miyako*.”

<日本のことわざ> 一住めば都一

ある人が様々な事情でそれまで住み慣れた土地を離れ、未知の地に住まなければならなくなりました。そこには、親類や知人など頼りになる人がひとりもない上に、今まで住んでいたところよりも鄙びており、気候風土や言葉も全く違います。生活の不便さや独りぼっちな寂しさから、はじめは新しい環境に馴染んで頑張っていくという前向きな気持ちにどうしてもなれなかったのですが、住まいの中に自分なりの快適な空間を作ったり、近所に楽しい時間を過ごせる場所を見つけたり、新しい友人ができたりして、いつしかそこがその人にとって居心地の良い場所、いわば「都」となったそうです。

「住めば都」ということわざは、このように「どんな所でも住み慣れるとそこが最も居心地良く思われてくる」ことを表しています。「都」とは一般的にはその国の首都、また都会という意味で、人口が多く、政治・経済・文化などあらゆる面で中心となる地のこと。昔は都以外の場所は淋しくて不便なところが多かったので、転じて暮らし良い場所という意味合いもありますが、「住めば都」というこのことわざは決して「住むなら都」という意味ではありません。

さて、それでは、どうしてこの人は未知だった地を「住めば都」と思えるようになったのでしょうか。その鍵は、未知なるものを受け入れ、自分のものとして楽しむ適応力にあります。未知なるものを畏れない好奇心や探求心など。今まで全く知らなかったことを知っていく過程は自分を一回りも二回りも成長させてくれるでしょう。

どのような場所も自分なりの「都」として快適に生活するために必要なこと、それはその地に愛着の持てる何かを探し出したり自分で作り出したりして、何事も積極的に取り組むことです。どんなときも「住めば都」と暮らしていけると良いですね。