

Echo

Say "Let's play"
"Let's play."
Say "You're stupid"
"You're stupid."
Say "I'm not going to play"
"I'm not going to play"
Then you become lonely, so you
Say "I'm sorry"
"I'm sorry."
Is it an echo?
No, it's nobody.

Written by Misuzu Kaneko

A word for echo in Japanese is *kodama*, and this word also means to follow another one's mind. When we were younger, we were surrounded by adults who spoke *kodama*. When we fell and said "That hurts," our parents or teacher would *kodama* and say, "that must hurt." When we say "Hello" at the peak of the mountain, we hear a *kodama* saying "Hello" back at us. But the echo comes back with half the loudness than when we first yell. In the same way, when we fell and someone echoed back "that must hurt," the pain was less than before.

During adolescence, we carried lots of pain, loneliness, and hardship inside our hearts. But by having adults who *kodama*, we were able to find relief in our daily troubles. How about now? When children say "that hurts," the adults reply, "No, that doesn't hurt." When they are rejected like that, where does that hurt go? Unfortunately, that pain just remains in their hearts. As children go through kindergarten and elementary school with parents that don't *kodama*, by the time they are in junior high, their hearts are overflowing with hurts that were never acknowledged. But before these children face more difficulties in the real world, they need to empty out the past hurts in their hearts, or else, it's only a matter of time for them to take the wrong direction in life. I wouldn't be surprised if this were one of the many causes of the increase in juvenile crimes. If not only people, but living creatures, the earth, and even space can *kodama* and echo one another's voices, we can create a peaceful world.

This year, at our Sports Day, the elementary students, junior high students, and even the kindergarteners joined together in unison and echoed chants and songs together. The power of their echoes gave me chills. My challenge to everyone is to look to those that are close to you and practice echoing their voices. This can be the first step towards understanding people better.