

Light of Wisdom
By Reverend Kazunori Takahashi

I'd like to share with you one story which would give us some lessons. Once upon a time, there was a temple in the mountain in Japan, and four monks practiced there. They were not ministers of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. They practiced hard to attain enlightenment. One day, they started a certain practice that they have to keep silent. Human life is busy so there is no time to compose the mind. In addition, keeping silent requires patience. Therefore, they started to practice keeping silent for seven days in the temple.

On the night of the first day, they lit a candle and continued silent practice in the temple. However, suddenly the wind had blown in from an opening in the window, so it blew out the candle. The room became completely dark. Then the youngest monk thought that this is trouble. He carelessly said, "Oh, the candle was blown out. I will light the candle again." However, they were just doing silent practice, so the next monk said, "Hey, be careful. We are now doing silent practice. You don't have to speak whatever happens," he said. But this monk also spoke unconsciously. The third monk was very disturbed by their speaking and became angry, so he said, "Hey, why are you speaking? Don't disturb your mind." But third monk also spoke and broke the silence. The first and second monks noticed that they spoke carelessly and they regretted it. The third monk also noticed that he advised them by speaking, so he thought his behavior was absolutely shameful.

When they spoke, the fourth monk who was the oldest of them was thinking that the three young monks are still inexperienced and not good enough. Then he spoke slowly, "Everyone, you need more practice. Only I could keep silent to the end." He spoke to the other monks in a confident voice. However, even he could not practice silence, because they started to practice keeping silent for seven days. Finally, the three young monks looked at the old monk in astonishment.

This story would teach us that it is easy to look at other people's action, but it is difficult for us to check ourselves. In addition, we would learn that it is hard for us to change such human nature. If we always think "I am right" it would be difficult to reflect on ourselves. Also conflicts would happen when two people strongly believe that they are correct. We would encounter similar situations in our daily lives. Buddhism teaches us that we tend to have this kind of behavior because of our self-centered viewpoint or blind passions.

However, if we think about some situations from another point of view, we would be able to see things differently. The story of the four monks teaches us the importance of self-reflections.

Shinran Shonin said: **The light dispels the darkness of ignorance; Thus Amida is called "Buddha of the Light of Wisdom." All the Buddhas and sages of the three vehicles together offer their praise.**

(Hymns of the Pure Land: Collected Works of Shinran, p.327)

Amida Buddha is always working for us because we often have worries and sufferings caused by our limited point of view. It's hard for us to change our viewpoint, however, we can live our daily lives listening to Amida Buddha's viewpoint and reflecting on ourselves. It is significant to learn about the teaching of Buddhism. It is also significant to learn about ourselves through it. Let us live our daily lives with the teaching of Nembutsu. Namo Amida Butsu.