

Entrusting Heart
By Reverend Kazunori Takahashi

In Jodo Shin Buddhism, it is very important to entrust our heart to Amida Buddha's compassionate working. Then we shall walk the path of life reciting Amida Buddha's name, "Namo Amida Butsu." However, I sometimes receive a question as follows: "Sensei, I understand that entrusting is important, but it is hard to know how to entrust our heart to Amida Buddha." Have you ever had this kind of question? Concerning this question, I'd like to share with you a story which taught me a great lesson. This story is about an elderly lady.

One day, she went to the doctor's office because she was not feeling well. She thought it was a slight illness, but contrary to her expectations, her illness was serious. She needed to undergo surgery. After the doctor told her about surgery, she started worrying about it. She was so worried if everything will go well.

In the morning of her surgery, she couldn't remove her anxiety. At that time, her doctor said to her, "I will start surgery now. I guess you worry about it. Let's do our best together." Thus the doctor encouraged her. She said yes, but she actually thought, "What can I do now? He encouraged me to do my best, but he is the one who must do the best." Since it was the first time for her to have surgery, she couldn't accept the words of encouragement from her doctor. Fortunately everything went well, then she recovered her health.

After several years, she had another illness and needed to undergo surgery again. It was not the first time for her, but she still worried about her surgery. An operating surgeon was another doctor. Then he also encouraged her before surgery, but his words were different: "Don't worry about anything, because I will definitely cure you. Leave it all to me and have a sleep during surgery." The two doctors encouraged her differently. Which one is good for you? In her second surgery, the words from her doctor relieved her anxiety. Surgery succeeded, then she got her health back again.

The relationship between the second doctor and the lady in the story would be compared with the one between Amida Buddha and us. Amida Buddha is always calling us. He doesn't say, "You must make special efforts to become a Buddha or to attain perfect peace of mind." In our life, we encounter various difficulties. At such time, it is important to make an effort to solve the problems. However, we sometimes encounter problems that we cannot solve by ourselves. It would sometimes be very hard for us to continue making an effort.

Amida Buddha is always calling us: "I know you have worries and sufferings. I will not abandon you. I will save you without fail. Please entrust your heart to my working, saying Namo Amida Butsu." Thus Amida Buddha always keeps calling us. If we become aware that we are living under the compassionate working and everything will be settled, we would firmly walk our path of life with great strength.

Shinran Shonin said: **Those who deeply entrust themselves to Amida's Vow of great compassion should all say Namo-amida-butsu constantly, whether they are waking or sleeping.**

(Hymns of the Dharma-Ages: *Collected Works of Shinran*, p.411)

In this passage, he encourages us to always recite "Namo Amida Butsu". "Namo" means "entrust." "Amida Butsu" means "Amida Buddha." Amida Buddha is always calling us "Entrust your heart to me." When we say "Namo Amida Butsu", it means "I understand. I entrust my heart to you." The story about the elderly lady would remind us of the relationship between Amida Buddha and us. Let us live our daily lives with Namo Amida Butsu.