

Medicine

By Reverend Kazunori Takahashi

Do you take any medicine now? We sometimes need to take medicines when we have a cold, headache or some sickness. Recently, my eyes were bothering me, so I went to see my eye doctor. She checked my eyes very carefully, then she gave me the appropriate medicine for my eyes. When I took the medicine, I really felt relief, because the medicine was just the right thing for my condition.

It reminded me of a story relating to the teachings of Buddhism. A long time ago, a serious sickness was wide spread. Many doctors attempted to make medicines, but they didn't work at all. However, one doctor continued trying to find a cure. He thought about it for a long time, and experimented with new drugs again and again. Finally, he succeeded. The other doctors were greatly surprised and started using the medicine for their patients.

Actually, this story is about the Nembutsu that we always recite. In this story, Amida Buddha is the doctor who made the great medicine. The Nembutsu, *Namo Amida Butsu*, is the medicine. As Amida Buddha knew that many people were suffering from the sickness, he resolved to create the medicine to save all people. Sakyamuni Buddha revealed to us this great medicine. Shinran Shonin said that this is the ultimate medicine for all ordinary people and strongly recommended that we have this medicine.

Actually, we all have had this disease, too. It is called the three poisons. The first poison is the greedy mind. In our daily lives, we all have different desires. We may think that "I want to get this. I want to get that." There is no end to our desires. If we get something, we might be satisfied for awhile. But, even if we are satisfied, we would have the next desire. Thus, it's really difficult for us to be satisfied completely. This is our greedy mind. If our desires are not satisfied, how do we feel? We would get mad. This mind arises from the second poison, the angry mind. The third poison is the ignorant mind. Because of this mind, it is difficult for us to always accept things as they are. We grumble because of our ignorant mind. These are the three poisons which are our afflictions or our blind passions. This is the sickness that many doctors have attempted to cure in the story.

There are two ways to avoid sickness. One is that we train our bodies and minds to purify them. In the case of Buddhism, this way is very difficult, for example, trying to accumulate only good karmas, concentrating ascetic practices, meditating silently for long time, etc. However, not all ordinary people can attain such practices.

There is another way. We could just take medicine. In the case of Buddhism, we could just entrust Amida Buddha and recite *Namo Amida Butsu*. Reciting the Nembutsu is easy to do for all people. Even small children and elderly people can do this. There is a reason that this medicine, *Namo Amida Butsu*, works very well.

This medicine contains Amida Buddha's great wisdom and compassion. He hopes, "Don't live suffering the three problems of your sickness. Please live your precious life full of joy. Please accept my hope and receive my medicine while calling my name, "*Namo Amida Butsu*."

Shiran Shonin said: **When we reflect on the establishment of the Vow, we find that the Tathagata, without abandoning sentient beings in pain and affliction, has taken the directing of virtue to them as foremost, thus fulfilling the mind of great compassion.**

(Hymns of the Dharma-Ages: Collected Works of Shinran, p.408)

However, there is one difficult point to have this medicine. Even if we listen to the effect, we may doubt this medicine. We may wonder why the Nembutsu is essential. However, please imagine how we have the medicine. At the beginning, I mentioned the medicine for my eyes. I didn't know the ingredients of the medicine. I never saw the person who made it. Also, it was very easy to take. However, since I didn't know how to treat my eyes, what I can do was trust the eye specialist.

Amida Buddha is the specialist of our human mind. He knows our nature very well. He hopes that we take the medicine, in other words, we live our daily lives through entrusting our heart to Amida Buddha and reciting the Nembutsu. Fortunately, this medicine has already been prepared. In addition, we can have it anytime anywhere. Let us live in our daily lives peacefully with Namo Amida Butsu.