

Human Relationships
By Reverend Kazunori Takahashi
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Once I was asked a question as follows: "I am troubled over relationships with my co-worker. I am always very hurt by her cruel words. She never listens to me. Could you tell me how to deal with this situation from a perspective on Buddhism?"

Have you ever had this kind of experience? We live our daily lives with various people in our homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities. If everybody were kind, it would be nice. However, we sometimes encounter people who give us trouble. We would deal with this trouble by changing circumstances. However, we cannot stay away all the time. In addition, even if we do that, we would encounter another troublesome person. Sakyamuni Buddha taught that there is a suffering of *Onzoeku* or having to associate with those we dislike. Buddhism teaches us that our suffering occurs when things do not go our way. Nobody likes to be given thoughtless words and deeds. However, it is difficult to change other people. What should we do in this kind of situation?

Thinking about this problem, I always remember one of my experiences about human relationships. When I was a university student, I had a part-time job at a certain workplace. There was a manager who was very difficult to get along with. Many workers complained about his ways. Some of them even quit because of his harsh words. I was also thinking of how to associate with him. One day, however, one of my co-workers changed my opinion of the manager. He said, "I understand he has a sharp tongue, but I like him. I think he has many good points. He always works hard. Although he doesn't show it, it seems he also thinks about his way of communication."

My co-worker's thoughtful comment surprised me because I had never heard such a comment. He even thought about why the manager behaved in that way. After talking with him, surprisingly I could look at the good points of the manager. This experience taught me that I can see things differently through setting aside my viewpoint and listening to another one.

The 33rd vow of Amida Buddha is: **When I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings throughout the countless and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters, having received my light and having been touched by it, will become soft and gentle in body and mind, surpassing humans and devas in those qualities. Should it not be so, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.**

(The Sutra on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life: *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, p. 26)

The 33rd vow teaches us that Amida Buddha's light makes our minds soft and gentle. If we are swayed by our self-centered viewpoints, we would think, "I am right. Others are wrong." or "Favorable people are good people. Unfavorable people are bad people." If we always have this kind of ideas, it would be hard to solve the problems. However, our viewpoints would be transformed by listening to Amida Buddha's guidance. It is like the light enables us to see things that we cannot see in a dark place.

We sometimes encounter problems of human relationships in our lives. It is difficult to change other people, but we can attempt to change ourselves by remembering the Buddha Dharma. At such times, we would be free from our hardened ideas and look at things reasonably. Amida Buddha is always working for us with great wisdom and compassion. Let us live our daily lives with the teaching of Nembutsu.
Namo Amida Butsu

