

## Entrusting Heart - March 2010

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Saturday, 06 March 2010

Editor's Note - This is an excerpt from the March 2010 issue of the Buddhist Wheel

The weather has been very cold, hasn't it? I had a slight cold the other day. Although I haven't had any serious illness, I catch a cold once a while. It might sound like an exaggeration, but even when I had a slight cold, I always felt lonely and miserable. When I was a child, I kind of liked to have a cold because I didn't have to go to school, and my mother and family treated me really nice. Also they fed me good food which I couldn't eat usually. But now, I feel little lonely when I get a cold because once the cold gets worse, I don't know what to do because I feel very alone.

One of my friends told me a story about his friend. His friend was a lady who was much older, but they were really close. She was kind and gentle. She also was a really hard worker, and always appreciated "Namu Amida Butsu." She chanted sutra every day, and read Kyo Gyo Shin Sho, Shinran Shonin's major writing. One time, the lady was stricken with a really serious disease, a matter of life and death. My friend went to hospital to visit her. Of course, he was worried, but he thought that even though her illness was serious, she would be calm because she had been listening to the Teaching for many years and appreciated "Namu Amida Butsu." So my friend thought that she would be calm and peaceful. When my friend went to the hospital, once the woman saw my friend's face, she said to him, "I cannot say Namu Amida Butsu. I cannot read Kyo Gho Shin Sho. Onembutsu does not come from my mouth."

My friend was really surprised and shocked. The lady had always really appreciated her life and teaching. But in the most important time in her life, she said she could not say Namu Amida Butsu and couldn't read Kyo Gyo Shin Sho which she kept with her most of the time. When I heard my friend's story, I was shocked, too. How could someone who behaved so devoutly sound so helpless?

The teaching we believe, Jodo Shinshu, Pure Land Buddhism, is often referred to as "easy way" compared to other sects. Yes, we don't have ascetic practice or severe rules. So, we might say our school's tradition is "easy".

But in Shoshinge, Shinran Shonin states, "The Nembutsu of Amida Buddha's Original Vow for persons who are possessed by blind passions is extremely difficult to believe and retain, of all difficulties nothing is more difficult than this. Our teaching's most important issue is the entrusting-heart. But to entrust ourselves to others is really difficult because it is scary. We, as persons who have countless desires and egos, are scared to let go everything even if Amida Buddha said, "Come as you are. It is o.k. to be sick, it is o.k. to be desperate, and it is o.k. to connote enormous egos. Just come as you are". To entrust ourselves to another means to let go of our ego and rely entirely on another. Especially at times of life and death, to entrust and let go of my own life is the hardest thing. We want to cling strongly to our life and happiness, yet we feel helpless and alone. I guess that is how many people, including me, feel when we get sick.

But even we are horrified, sad, and desperate, and can't say single word of appreciation or Nembutsu, Amida Buddha never leaves us. That is because for us who are possessed by blind passions and can't let go of our desires, Amida Buddha established the Pure Land and has prepared everything. Let us appreciate Amida Buddha's warm compassion and deep wisdom.

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