

August Discussion Topic –Turning Poison into Medicine

In any circumstance we can transform our negative situation into something positive. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo has the benevolent power to turn poison into medicine. Nichiren Daishonin explained the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and said that through the power of the Mystic Law - Nam-myoho-renge-kyo - we can turn every illusion, every kind of karma, and every kind of suffering into Buddhahood, wisdom, and benefit.

Poison indicates misfortune and unpleasant events in life. Medicine indicates happiness and improvement. Turning poison into medicine means having the power to turn loss, pain, or failure into joy and benefit. From a Buddhist point of view, every negative experience contains a deep, positive power.

The key here is how we react to the inevitable suffering in life. We are often forced to change ourselves through negative, painful difficulties. A Buddhist scripture describes illness as awakening to the desire to seek the truth. People decide to dedicate their lives to peace and justice because they have experienced war or other kinds of injustice. If we allow ourselves to be defeated by our suffering or react negatively and destructively to our difficulties, the original “poison” will not be turned into medicine, but remains poison.

The process of turning poison into medicine begins when we regard our difficulties as an opportunity to grow, reflect on ourselves and develop courage and compassion. In this way, our suffering becomes a springboard to deeper happiness.

Buddhism teaches that our suffering arises from karma; the causes we have created ourselves. The Buddhist principle of karma is one of personal responsibility. It is therefore our responsibility to turn our suffering into value. The Buddhist view on karma is not static or fatalistic - we can change even the most deeply rooted karmic tendencies.

By using a problem such as illness, unemployment, mourning or betrayal as an opportunity to increase our sense of responsibility, we can develop a self-awareness that gives rise to good fortune. In Buddhism we learn that by knowledge ourselves we eventually become aware of our limitless potential; our inherent courage, wisdom, and compassion. These are called ‘Buddha nature’. We can resolutely overcome any obstacle and raise our life condition by turning adversity into good fortune. This can be achieved by everyone, without exception, thanks to the principle of “turning poison into medicine” based on our faith in the Mystic Law.

* Do you have an experience with transforming poison into medicine?

* Does your Buddhist practice help you to not be defeated by your difficulties?