

Venerable Master Chin Kung: What are the three root causes of illnesses? Shall I send a patient with dementia to a care home?

Q: Mr Huang Yin asked a question.

His colleague's mother has dementia. She keeps swearing. The colleague and other family members are afraid of approaching her.

They wanted to send her to a care home, but then felt it is too cruel. They do not know what to do.

A: For this case, we need to see the actual situation. You ask me, but I have not seen it in person.

I do not know if you have.

We must see the actual situation first.

Before sending her to a care home, your colleague and his family should visit the care home first and see if it is suitable.

If they look after her at home, they can seek advice and assistance from a doctor to provide proper care.

In previous lessons we learned many times that illnesses and suffering of all beings are due to karmic hindrances. There are three types of root causes.

The first type is inappropriate diet. The ancients said, 'Illnesses come from the mouth. So does misfortune.'

That is why we must take extra care with our diet and living habits. Nowadays, it is very difficult to have hygienic food.

Irrespective of the countless germs carried in meat products, who would dare to eat meat if they know what is really going on behind the scenes?

When I was in Taiwan, some fellow practitioners told me that pig feed is all made of chemicals.

I heard that there is even genetically modified feed due to science and technology. Six months after a pig is born, it is big enough to be slaughtered.

Chicken feed is also made of chemicals. Six weeks after a chick is hatched, it is big enough to be slaughtered and sold.

All these animals' flesh contains poison. It is why people attract all sorts of strange illnesses after consuming the meat.

So, for those of us who are vegetarian, are we in a better situation? Not really.

There are many pesticides in vegetables. Vegetable farmers sell the vegetables to other people but do not eat them themselves.

For their own consumption, the farmers grow vegetables in a separate allotment without using any pesticides. So some vegetables can look very fresh and pretty,

but they are not normal. Rice also contains poisons. I heard that some sellers mix rice with talcum powder. It makes rice look very pretty.

My teacher, Mr Li, told us that people today are truly pitiable. Three meals a day, full of poisons.

In every meal we take poisons. If you say, you do not want to get ill. It is not easy.

In cities there are chemicals in tap water.

Perhaps a few years later there will be poisons found in the air. This kind of life is not easy.

These illnesses are physiological. Doctors can help. Medicine can help.

But medicine can only cure physiological illnesses, not mental illnesses.

If you have this type of illnesses, you will recover with the doctor's diagnosis and prescriptions.

I also mentioned before, 'Is it truly the doctor who cure your illness?' No, it is not. In fact, it is your faith in the doctor that cured your illness.

A patient goes to see the doctor, the treatment relies on his faith in the doctor. If he has faith in the doctor, it is easy to cure.

Our faith plays 90 per cent of the role in a successful treatment. The doctor is only a condition and the role they play is less important.

When I was in Texas, the USA, I discussed it with a doctor and he admitted it.

The second type of illness is caused by one's debtors. It is when one is possessed by one's debtors. This type is very tricky. It is not physiological.

Nowadays, many illnesses of this type are found in China and across the world. These illnesses make one lose one's sanity. It is very painful.

In most cases, these patients are sent to psychiatric hospitals. Nowadays, people call the illness 'schizophrenia', caused by the revenge from one's debtors.

For us Buddhist practitioners, many have attended Samadi Water Confession Service before. It originated from the Venerable Master Wuda of the Tang Dynasty. One of his debtors from a previous life possessed him.

Illnesses of this type can be treated by a type of Buddhist service which mediates between the patient and their debtors.

If the debtor accepts the mediation, they leave the patient's body and the patient recovers. If they do not accept it, it can be very tricky.

But in most cases, debtors accept the mediation. So, it is precious.

Sometimes we see a patient goes to a Buddhist monastery, invites a monk or nun to recite a Buddhist sutra and do a confession service for them. Then they recover.

Their illness falls in this category. But if you have cold, attending a confession service will not work.

So, it is important to know the root cause of an illness.

The third type of illness is the trickiest. It is like the dementia you mentioned in your question.

This type of illness is not physiological. It has nothing to do with debtors. It is due to karmic hindrances. Most difficult to cure.

It is caused by all the wrong things that one did in either previous lives or this life.

We must know that many respectful and sincere Buddhist practitioners, be they monks, nuns or lay practitioners, experience karmic hindrances in their old age and have dementia.

They no longer recognise familiar faces. It is tricky. For us Pure Land practitioners, we seek rebirth in the Pure Land by chanting Amitabha Buddha's name. We must remember that

the foremost criterion of a successful rebirth is to remain conscious and sane in the last moments before our death.

Our last thought has to be wanting to go to the Pure Land and seeking tutelage from Amitabha Buddha. If it is the case, we will definitely be reborn in the Pure Land.

But if we cannot even recognise familiar faces in the last moments before our death, it is useless even if there are people chanting Amitabha Buddha's name for us.

It is why we must not do bad things. If we do lots of bad things, what can we do when we die?

If the karmic hindrances arise when we die, we will definitely gain rebirth in one of the three evil realms. It is really horrible.

If we only think for this life, we are too short-sighted.

A wise person definitely thinks for their next lives. They are truly wise.

We only have a short stay in this life. If you consider this world to be your home, it is wrong.

I regard it to be a hotel. I am not attached to it in the slightest.

I want nothing from it. Even if you send it to me, I will not take it.

Why? Because I know that you send it to me out of good intentions. If it is not well-intended, then you meant to harm me.

You could be well-intended, but you are ignorant of the truth. I will not be fooled. Even if you send it to me, I will not accept it.

We must understand this principle. We must do good things and must not do bad things.

Many fellow practitioners ask me where to start when we practise the Buddha's teachings. The ancients were right. They said, 'Start with telling no lies.'

The Infinite Life Sutra records that Sakyamuni Buddha taught us the three guiding principles of practising the Buddha's teachings.

The first thing he mentioned is 'Guard one's own mouth properly and do not complain and gossip about other people's wrongdoings'. Out of our actions,

speech and thoughts, the Buddha put speech on the top of the list to be guarded.

We must understand this principle. We must not do anything against our conscience.

If you do it, what can you do in your old age? What can you do when your karmic hindrances arise?

At that moment, you will be most regretful.

So, this type of illness is due to karmic hindrances. But is there any cure for it? Yes, there is.

The patient must truly repent and be determined to correct themselves. But by then, their karmic hindrances have already arisen and they have lost sanity, how could they repent?

If the patient has a truly loving and respectful child, like the two children mentioned in the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Sutra, i.e.,

the daughter of a brahman and the bright-eyed daughter, yes, the patient will be saved.

But this kind of children are nowhere to be found today. These children are truly determined to cease doing whatever is bad and ready to do whatever is good.

They are genuinely determined and do their best. As a result, they attain awakening and then dedicate this merit to their parents. This works.

But if your practice has not reached their level of awakening, you cannot save your parents or family members.

We must attain that level of awakening. Then, it works. It is because the merit is so high that it can save the patient.

So, there are three types of root causes of illness. Once we know them, we will be able to choose the right treatment.

But to maintain good physical and mental health, the most important factor is having a pure mind, unconditional love and compassion.

If we constantly cultivate our pure minds, unconditional love and compassion for other beings, the consequence is good health and a long life.

