

## **A HISTORY OF HEALING IN LYTTON**

Rev. Master Kōten

### Part 1.

Although everyone is familiar with St. Bartholomew's Hospital, not everyone would be aware of the long connection between Lytton and the art and science of healing.

The story of St. Bartholomew's actually begins in 293 B.C., when an outbreak of plague in Rome caused the city to send for a statue of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine, from Epidaurus which was the most celebrated healing centre in the Classical world. The statue was enshrined on an island in the Tiber River where there were already healing springs and a hospital was established there.

In 998 A.D. the island was rededicated to St. Bartholomew, apostle, who was known to answer the prayers of the poor and sick and a Christian church and hospital established. The relics of the apostle were enshrined there and the healing springs reconsecrated to him.

Just over a hundred years later a visiting Englishman named Rahere, who had been the King's jester, became sick with malaria while on pilgrimage and was taken to the hospital. While Rahere was there he had a vision of St. Bartholomew, who promised healing to him and asked that he establish a hospital for the poor and sick when he returned to England.

In 1102 Rahere founded a church and hospital dedicated to St. Bartholomew. This was the origin of the famous St. Bartholomew's Hospital, "St. Bart's" in London, which still functions as a great centre of healing and medicine to this very day.

When the early Anglicans came to Lytton and conceived of founding a hospital here it was natural that in 1893 it be dedicated to St. Bartholomew and thus continue a healing tradition of more than two thousand years.

As it happens the Catholic mission in Lytton was also dedicated with a connection to healing . St. Ann , after whom the present church is named, is famous as the focus of the two great healing pilgrimages of St. Anne de Beaupre in Quebec and Lac St. Anne in Alberta.

### Part 2.

When the Chinese came to Lytton in the 1850's they brought with them a

healing tradition of their own going back at least to 2838 B.C., when the legendary Emperor Shen Nong is credited with establishing the basis of Chinese herbal medicine through the painstaking process of testing more than three hundred plants that could be used for healing. He eventually became the god of medicine prayed to for advice on healing remedies.

The coming of Buddhism to China in the first century B.C. brought the traditions of Indian medicine, as well as the recognition of the power of compassion to heal. This compassion eventually came to be represented as Kwan yin, the one who listens.

Among the Chinese who came to Canada for the gold and later railway work were men who were knowledgeable in herbal medicine, and they gave treatment to everyone including the First Nations and Europeans as well as their fellow countrymen. The first Chinese doctor in Canada started practice in 1859.

In early 1880s the Chinese in Lytton suffered from a series of disease outbreaks that resulted in much suffering and death; and so they conceived the desire for a place where they might go to pray for the dead and for healing of both body and spirit.

This dream was fulfilled with the opening of the Joss House in Lytton. This was a small temple dedicated to healing in the form of Kwan yin, Great Compassion, attended by Shen Nong, Patron of Herbal Medicine and Zhu Rong, Protector from Fire (including the fires of anger and disease). Ah Cheuh became keeper of the Joss House.

On May 10th 1883 the Chinese railway workers at camp #37 were attacked, and one man named Ye Fook was beaten to death. The injured men were taken to the Joss House in Lytton for treatment where Ah Fook died of his injuries one week later.

When the Joss House was finally taken from the Chinese and torn down in 1928, there were protests from Chinese people all over B.C. as well as from the Chinese government but to no avail.

Most joss houses in Canada seem to have been devoted to the ancestral gods of commerce and business success in the new world. The temple in Lytton may very well be unique in its dedication to healing and to Great Compassion.

On June 28, 1928 Tun Kee, who kept a small store on the road to Earls court Farm and dispensed Chinese medicine to everyone who came, was shot dead in his home and place of business. He was eighty-one years old.

The Chinese healing tradition continues down to the present day in Canada through the gifts of acupuncture and herbal medicine which have become so integral to modern health care.

### Part 3.

The Nlaka'pamux have been the holders of this place at the coming together of the great rivers since time out of mind. Their stories tell how the Botanie Valley was created by the Old Woman as a source of medicine and healing plants as well as food.

They were there, in that valley, in midsummer 1808, when Simon Fraser and his companions came down the river in canoes. When they were told of the approach of the strangers, the people came down with their leaders and healers to the place where the rivers meet and to the encounter which was to alter everything beyond recognition.

Their healing tradition continues down to the present not only in the medicines such as Devil's club ointment and Arnica salve made by local people but also in the knowledge shared with all who come. The Chinese healers as well as the European herbalists such as Louis Hautier, a Belgian immigrant who built the first Lytton Hotel, have all learned from the Nlaka'pamux people the benefits of the healing plants, and have gathered medicine in the Botanie Valley.

### Part 4.

This is a place where everything meets, the wind and the sky, the rivers and the mountains, the heat and the cold and where everyone meets, from East and West, upriver and downriver, residents and sojourners and those "just passing through", the humans and the animals.

The meetings in the past have been often difficult with as much pain as comfort. May this meeting and mixing and melding be towards joy and learning and at last to healing.

## **THE JOURNEY**

Rev. Master Kōten

Come, my brother - Let us climb.

They do not let us be any more,

not even for a sliver of the day's sun across the floor  
and we must go.

Who will be elder? - one who helps -  
younger? - one who is helped in that moment -  
Are we even "brothers"? - I do not remember.

We have to go - to Climb - lest we die  
Where to go? - direction? - Compass?

Under my pillow where I keep my heart,  
for safekeeping - I have looked -  
have seen as in a deep well - looking down into - looking up,  
—light!

I will follow it - you come too.

The steps up - are there steps? - are broken here.  
Did I say that there was light somewhere?

Shall we survive? - we were not "surviving" there  
- down there - I will not go back.

Come my brother - Let us help and be helped,  
until we emerge into the star light...  
I will go first to make a place for thee.

If I fail on the way and thou alone emerge -  
go up into the light for both of us and await me there.

I will come.

## REMOVING ONESELF FROM DISASTER

Sherron Soo

I've been a Buddhist for a number of years and have had the fortunate opportunity to attend a number of retreats and listen to a number of Dharma talks. One teaching in particular I've heard a lot about is the teaching on "emptiness". Everything is fundamentally empty; do not get caught up with the dualities of being right versus wrong; good versus evil, etc. Along with this teaching, my master, Rev. Master Kōten has always stressed the importance of "getting oneself out of the way. Do what needs to be done." Another teaching is "Stop the cycle of suffering. Karma exists." Also "Help others to succeed and allow them to reveal their true nature, their Buddha Nature".

All of these teachings were brought to fruition recently when I had to deal with a stressful situation at work. For the past five months I kept having conflicts with a co-worker, and for what reasons I couldn't fathom. My suffering was immense and I wanted the incidents to stop but I did not know what to do. Rev. Master has always said it's of course easier to keep the Precepts around those people that one gets along with; however the real challenge comes when we meet those that are more difficult. A sixth encounter happened and this time desperation drove me to confront my co-worker. I asked my co-worker respectfully if she had time in her day to meet with me to discuss the most recent incident. We did meet and what I found out was that I had inadvertently offended my co-worker two years ago and that she was still harboring this resentment two years after the fact. She wanted an apology from me. I did not agree that I needed to apologize but with sitting very, very still I realized that I could do this. I could become "empty" and get my "self out of the way." It was also an opportunity to practice "purposeful use of self." I apologized and instantly that opened up a dialogue between us. It was as if a curtain had fallen away. My co-worker let the resentment fall away and I was able to see again her true nature, her Buddha Nature. How beautiful it was! How wonderful she was! She and I were able to stop the wheel of karma and view again each other's true Buddha Nature. My co-worker even said that she had missed talking to me and was glad that she could do that again! All I had to do was to get myself out of the way and use myself to stop the

suffering. My other options, and I did think of them at the time, were to seek the help of my supervisor and failing that, to look for a new job. I was letting the situation become a disaster! Thank goodness I applied training and the Buddhist precepts to meet the situation instead.

Another unexpected outcome from this encounter was that my co-worker thanked me for asking her to sit down and talk about what was happening between us. She told me that normally she doesn't deal with conflict this way. From me, however, she learned a new, and perhaps better (my co-worker's words, not mine) way of reconciling conflict. What a surprising ending to our conflict! What I learned is that you don't have to hold onto self. You don't always have to be right, even if you are technically "right". Look at what needs to be done and do what is good. Allow Buddha nature to express itself. So this is what Rev. Master Koten means! Thank goodness for the teachings of the Dharma. Thank goodness for training. What a different way to live in the world if we don't engage in the cycle of suffering!