



GASSHO

JULY
2010

Issue No: 07-10

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



WHY SAKYAMUNI APPEARED!

(*Shoshin Ge* lines 93-100)
rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

July is when local Buddhists go to their temples to hold O'bon memorial services for all their deceased loved ones. It is precious spiritual time when memories of one's deceased parents, brothers, sisters and children are fondly recalled and reflected upon.

The Buddha taught, however, that it was by recalling and facing up to the painful and bitter memories of our past that we come to experience Amida Buddha's Great Compassion full of "understanding love and loving understanding" and especially forgiveness!

This is why Shinran said:

You should understand that the moment of settling of the person who entrusts himself to Tathagata's Primal Vow (to unconditionally save him) is none other than the settling into the stage of non-retrogression, because he receives the benefits of being grasped, never to be abandoned. Thus is awakened the heart and mind that will attain the supreme enlightenment. This is called the stage of non-retrogression (to be illuminated by Wisdom's Light), the truly settled (and to be unconditionally embraced by Amida's Compassion never to be abandoned), and the stage equal to the supreme enlightenment (Supreme Buddhahood to be attended at death.) [SBT-Series. *Letters of Shinran*. No. 7 p. 33 () mine.]

Therefore, by Power of Amida's Wisdom and her Virtues of Compassion we are made aware of our *karmic* evils full of insensitivities that have and are hurting not only our selves, but also harming the very things of our innocent living ecosystems (reflect on what is now happening in the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico).

When a person trusts and takes absolute refuge in Amida or the *Dharma's* Selfless Light and its All-embracing Life, his ingratitude, impertinence and irreverence begins "to be turned into" what becomes

MONTH'S THOUGHT



Amida Buddha does not set us aside and give up bringing about our enlightenment just because we do not have faith. Rather, how much more will Amida Buddha take pity on us if we do not have faith: He cannot help but bring about our faith which leads to enlightenment. That is his nature. [Yoshitaka Tamai. *Ichinyo*. p. 26]



his profound gratitude, penitence and reverence for all that gives and supports life.

The following views are found in the Book of Genesis that sets man above all of God's creations and entitles human beings to all that he had created as follows:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them **have dominion over** the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping

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REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES

for
JULY 2010

1st SUN JUL 4th:

ANNUAL O'BON SERVICE

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Guest Spkr:

Rev. Koho Takata

Executive Sectary to Bishop
Honpa Honganji

2nd SUN JUL 11th:

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk for
Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

Bon Dance Practice

Tues. Jul 13 only

7:30 to 9:00 P.M

"BON DANCE NIGHTS"

FRI- 16rd/ SAT- 17th

7:30 to 10:30 P.M.

NOTE: Short Bon Services

Temple sanctuary

7 p.m.

For all deceased members

Stone Memorial

7:20 p.m.

For all war dead

3rd SUN JUL 18th:

Services Cancelled

Waianae Members!!

If you wish to hold
O'Bon services for your
deceased family members,
call Rev. Tatsuguchi
(949-2801)

4th SUN Jul 25th:

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk for
Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

KARAOKE CLASS Mon - 7 - 9 P.M.

Mr. Nelson Yoshioka

KARATE Tues/Fri - 6 - 9 P.M.

Shihan -Walter Nishioka

FUJINKAI SEWING CLUB Wed - 9 - 11 A.M.

J. Kobuke/A. Murata

THANK YOU FOR
YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!!

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Continued on p. 8

With Deepest Sympathy

Ms. Hanako Uota 84yr May 29, 2010

Mr. Kazumi Okura 87yr June 10, 2010

thing that creepeth upon the earth (*Genesis* 1: 26)

The question then arises: “who is the ‘let us?’” and who are the “them?” being referred to here? God then says to man to also “subdue” the earth (*Genesis* 1: 28). Then he says:

... every beast of the earth and every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth on the earth, wherein there is life, I have given thee every green herb for meat (meaning for food), and it was so (*Genesis* 1: 30)

These God given “rights” and “entitlements” conferred upon man certainly do not agree with the Buddha’s views concerning the “actuality” that all things living and non-living are governed by the uniform and orderly laws of causation, conditionality, and especially the facts of interdependency. This is exactly why all things and beings should be revered and worshiped as being sacred and spiritual.

Now, concerning this process of “inner transformation,” Shinran Shonin cautions:

... on the one hand, you should not be anxious that Tathagata will not receive you because you do wrong. A foolish being is by nature possessed of blind passion, so you must recognize yourself as a being of karmic evil. On the other hand, you should not think that you deserve to attain birth because you are good. You cannot be born into the true and real Buddha Land through such self-power calculation. ... [*Letters. ibid.*]

We can see in these words the difference between what is an “awakening of faith” and what it is to “convert” someone of another religion over to one’s own beliefs, religion and congregation.

This sad state of being a mere mortal full of “blind passions” and “foolish vanities” is illustrated by the pictographic *kanji* compound for *bonno*. The pictograph *bon-* depicts the “eye” of a person pierced by an arrow whose tip is barbed and poisoned with the “three venoms” of greed, resentment, and pride! These sensations fill him with a burning that inflames his selfishness, insatiability and sense of self-importance. For sensual desires arouses a sense of misplaced pride that then set one’s heart on fire with the desire to

WORDS OF SHINRAN

... Does one know what power the Buddha possesses when he says that because of one’s karmic evil it is impossible to be saved? Even those wrongdoers who commit the five grave offenses, because of ten utterances (of *nembutsu*), attain birth in an instant; even more (so than) those who never go so far as to commit the five grave offenses, and in merit far surpass that of ten utterances. [Shinran Shonin. *Notes on ‘Essentials of Faith Alone.’* (SBTS-Series.) pp. 67, 68. () mine]

overpower, conquer, subdue, and appropriate whatever or whoever is within sight in order to control them, to possess what they have, and to gain the affirmation of one’s peers. When these are frustrated, then feelings of anger, rage and hate begin to burn.

Therefore, the pictograph for *-no* appended to the pictograph *bon-* depicts a man boiling in a cauldron of boiling water fueled by the fires of greed, resentment and vanity burning beneath it. Therefore, not only is a person cooking and boiling in sensuality, but his mind and heart are also steaming with blatant thoughts of selfishness and feelings of self-righteousness. The puffs of steam above the cover indicates this boiling and steaming of one’s mind and body (*nama-rupa*) in the cauldron. This psycho-physical state of “unenlightened” man’s mind and heart assailed by burning passions and steaming desires is indicated by the *kanji* radical for *kokoro* in the vertical to the left of the cauldron. In this instance, the radical *kokoro* on the vertical indicates that such a person’s mind, heart, body and spirit are simultaneously being afflicted by ingratitude, impertinence, irreverence, and, therefore, lacking in sympathy, remorse or penitence. Therefore, the ideographic compound *bonno* depicts the plight of a *bombu*, or mortal being, who are “all too human” because they are constantly boiling and burning in a cauldron of passions, desires and vanities!

The *Ullambana Sutta* (J. *Urabon Gyo*) speaks of the “six ways” in which we human beings are on fire and burning. They are: 1. by pursuing a life of pleasure, comfort, ease, recognition and praise (heavenly, celestial beings); 2. by striving and competing with others for power and control like gladiators (fighting titans); 3. by living a life full of paradoxes and contradictions (human existence); 4. by behaving like brute animals (predator beasts); 5. by living a life afflicted by insatiability, discontent and dissatisfactions (hungry ghosts); and finally, 6. by suffering and undergoing endless torment and anguish (hellish existence). All six ways of existence are characterized by things and situations that are always changing and never the same.

GASSHO is the Monthly Newsletter of

SHINSHU KYOKAI MISSION of HAWAII

1631 S. Beretania Street, Honolulu, Hawaii,
96826-1105 Temple 973-0150;

Editor: Rev. R. K. Tatsuguchi

Circulation: SKM Staff

PUBLICATION DATE: June 26, 2010

Therefore, all things (*sarva dharma*) throughout the "six realms of transmigration" are impermanent (*anicca*) and are lacking in a self that stays and remains the same (*atman*). Humans, in addition, experience the deadly venoms of greed, envy, resentments, mistrust, and arrogance that keep corroding their relationships and keep compromising the things of their living environment that are supporting and sustaining their very lives.

The *Larger Sutra*, therefore, mentions that human beings are driven by the endless struggle for food, drink, clothing, shelter, social recognition, and especially the affirmation of their peers. Furthermore, their bio-physiological struggle to survive and reproduce their kind ("ceaseless births and deaths"), this struggle adds to their torment and sufferings, especially when death claims a loved one in ones family. They also are compeled to keep justifying their egoism, ethno-centrism and anthropocentrism, or what is to assert their "superiority" over flora and fauna. (See bibilical quotes above).

Buddhism, however, teaches that the earth is not the center of the Cosmos. Neither, therefore, are human beings the center of the unfathomable universe. Nor is man above and superior to the rest of creation. Each thing and life form exists by virtue and power of all the other things and living forms around it that are constantly sustaining and supporting its very survival and existence. This is why such things even as "... plants, trees, and land all attain Buddhahood." (SBT-Series. *Notes on Essentials* ... p. 42). This means that in the Buddhist perspective all living and non-living things are sacred and spiritual. That is, all life is to be revered, not desecrated.

The mistaken assumptions, presumptions and arrogance of human beins (*bombu*) are indicated by Shinran's following *Wasan*:

Outwardly, each of us
presents a face of
being knowledgeable,
good and dedicated,
While, in reality, greed, anger,
deceit and falsehoods,
Fill our innermost beings!
Shozomatsu Wasan 95
rkt trans. 9c

In the *Larger Sutra*, the following words also are found:

... worldly people are insincere and superficial. They fight over insignificant matters. In the midst of this wickedness and agony, they make a living for themselves by working hard. Whether noble or common, rich or poor, young or old, man and woman, they all worry about

money and property. Whether they are rich or not, their anxiety is the same. [Kenjo Urakami. *Amida Buddha and His Pure Land: Three Sutras and One Treatise.* pp. 73, 74]

Do not these words ring true even for today as they did in the days of the Buddha?

Today, the ramifications (*karmic* effects) of man's blatant transgression and desecrations have taken on global proportions and ramifications. Human beings continue to suffer and are tormented by their own blatant transgressions and mindless desecrations of things that are eternally sacred and timelessly spiritual. This is because each person's mind and heart is lacking the Light of the *Dharma's* Wisdom and Compassion. Without the *Dharma's* Truth of Selflessness that has, and yet continues to sustain and undergird the Togetherness of all things living and non-living, man's thoughts, motives, words and deeds will keep rotating in "the counter clockwise rotation" poisoned by greed, hatred and pride.

In the axial center of the "six realms," hidden under its "hub," is a wild black boar groveling in mud, a prancing rooster is loudly crowing and a slithering asp is spewing out venom. They are chasing one the other in "the counter clockwise rotation." The counter clockwise chasing is to indicate that the powers of insatiability (boar), resentment (asp) and vanity (rooster), though hidden and out of sight under the hub of the Wheel of Life, are, nevertheless, constantly undermining the clockwise rotation of the Right *Dharma*, or the Wheel of *Dharma* that is the other side of the Wheel of Life that is a Boundless Sphere!

The "Wheel of Life" is made of two hemispherical halves which in the one dimension appears as a circle, a disc or a circumference. This twofold hemispherical aspect of the Wheel of Life means that the spherical half that is "the world of *samsara*" and the spherical half that is "the Boundless World of *Nirvana*," are, in actuality, *karmically* inseparable and causally interconnected. They form a Boundless, Expansive Sphere of *Dharma*, or what is the world of *Dharmakaya*. Thus, the Pure Land of Amida cannot be thought of or "visualized" as a detached "heaven" that is up there somewhere that has no connection to a "hell" that is somewhere down here below the surface of the earth that we are standing on. The Pure Land is not a place where only "good persons" get to go, while hell is a place where "evil persons" are cast into a furnace depicted as an everlasting fire where they are to be "incinerated,"

Now, according to Shinran Shonin, because the "cups of our minds" are full of holes and the "cups of our hearts" are full of cracks, the only thing left that we can do is to take that most crucial decisive "leap of

faith" into the *Dharma* Ocean itself if we are to fully receive the benefits of its life giving waters of Compassion and its cool, refreshing currents of Wisdom. Shinran Shonin, in having done so, referred to himself as "*Gutoku no Shinran.*" *Gutoku* means that he became a person who has become aware of his unworthiness, and a person "quite awake" as to how undeserving he actually is to have become a beneficiary of Amida Buddha's Unfailing Wisdom and Unconditional Compassion that never forsakes or abandons anyone, especially those who have committed the five deadly transgressions and slandered the Right Dharma.

This is why the *Larger Sutra* speaks of the plight of "upside down" human beings repeating ceaseless births and deaths in the Six Realms of Transmigration as follows:

"... People in the world of lust and desire are born alone and die alone, come alone and leave alone Corresponding to one's action, one is reborn in a land of suffering or of happiness. One receives this by oneself [as the consequence of one's former *karma*]. There is no substitute [or someone else to suffer the *karmic* consequences of our *karma*]. As one's goodness or evil changes, so one has a different destination either of blessing or misfortune. [Urakami. *loc. cite.*, pp. 75, 76 [] mine.]

In this passage we get an insight as to why bad *karma* brings about evil consequences in our thoughts, feelings, words, and actions that are of necessity governed by the laws of causation. By trusting and taking refuge in the transformative virtues and powers of Amida's good *karma*, a man's ingratitude, complacency, arrogance and irreverence become transformed into his gratitude, humility, penitence and reverence. And in this "process of transformation" a person's negative *karma*, or the "*karmic* knots" he has tied on his rope of life, are not "cut off," nor are they "incinerated, but they become instead "untied."

This means that the *karmic* working and activity of Amida does not nullify or negate the processes of causation, conditionality and interdependency. This also means that Amida's Wisdom works to untie the "*karmic* knots" on a person's rope of life that keeps one strapped and hanging in the upside down position like a ball of string full of knots and tangles. Once again, this transformative process is best appreciated through the analogy of the very "bitterness" in a green persimmon naturally turning into its very "sweetness" by virtue and powers of the sun's rays and warmth. In this process, the green persimmon is not being incinerated, nor is it being turned into an apple or an orange. This natural process of becoming (*jinen hoo ni*) is not a supernatural one. It is not a process that contravenes

SHINRAN'S WASAN

This "me" that I am,
unable to discern
"this" from "that,"
unable to know
what is truly
"right" or "wrong,"

Lacking in even a miniscule
of pity and compassion,
This "me" keeps seeking
recognition as a teacher
and personal fortune!

Shozomatsu Wasan 116

rkt trans.

the laws of causality or of *karma*, though it is beyond human understanding and comprehensions.

In the *Larger Sutra*, Buddha turns to Maitreya to explain the "five kinds of evil" that celestials, humans and lesser beings keep repeating in their rounds of endless births and deaths (flowing and spiraling in the counter clockwise rotation).

... The first evil is this. Devas (celestials and heavenly beings), humans and lesser beings (brutish, insatiable and demonic beings), including even those that crawl, are bent on doing evil. There is no being that is not. The strong subdue the weak; all inflict serious injuries and kill each other, all devour their prey (evolutionism). Not knowing how to do good, they commit evil and do outrageous and unruly deeds. [Hisao Inagaki. *The Three Pure Land Sutras*. pp. 291, 292. () mine.]

... The second evil is that people of this world—parents, children, brothers and sisters, members of a family, husbands and wives – all lack moral principles, break laws, conduct themselves arrogantly, commit licentious and unruly acts, pursue their own pleasures, enjoy themselves as they will, and deceive each other. What they think contradicts what they say; they speak without sincerity, flatter others with deceitful intention, fawn upon others with artful words, envy the reputation of sages, abuse the virtuous, and entrap people by dishonest means. [*loc. cite.*, p. 293]

... The third evil is this. People of the world live together, inhabiting this realm between heaven and earth, with a limited life-span. On the one hand, among the higher levels there are wise, rich, honourable, noble, and wealthy people. On the other hand, among the lower levels there

are people who are poor, debased, crude and foolish. Besides, there are evildoers who always harbour vicious thoughts and think only of self-gratification; they are ... greedy and miserly, and desirous of what they have no right to possess. ... [*loc. cite.*, pp 295, 296]

... The fourth evil is this. People of the world do not think of doing good. They incite each other to commit various kinds of evil – uttering hard and abusive words, telling lies, and engaging in idle talk. They slander others and cause contention. They hate and envy good men and ruin the wise, while they rejoice in watching this behind the scenes. ... [*loc. cite.*, p. 297]

... The fifth evil is this. People of the world are indecisive and slothful, reluctant to do good, lacking in self-discipline and not working hard at their occupations, so their families and dependents are left to suffer from hunger and cold. ... [*op. cite.*, pp. 298-299]

... Neither do they believe that after death one is reborn into another state of existence, that good deeds bring about good rewards, or that evil acts bring about evil consequences. The result of one's karma must be born by oneself alone and no one else can take one's place. [*loc. cite.* pp. 300-301]

Sakyamuni Buddha continues to explain to Maitreya:

... I have become a Buddha in this world, destroyed the five evils, removed the five sufferings, and extinguished the five burnings. I have countered evil with good, eradicated the suffering of birth-and-death, and enabled people to acquire the five virtues and attain the peace of unconditioned Nirvana. [*loc. cite.*, p. 305]

Finally, Maitreya in *gassho* (palms together in gratitude and reverence) praises Sakyamuni Buddha:

... O Buddha, how sincere and earnest your admonition is! People of the world are just as you have described. O Tathagata, you take pity on and care for us without discrimination and seek to deliver us all from suffering. Having accepted the Buddha's repeated exhortations I will be careful not to disobey them. [*ibid.*]

Let us then keep well in mind what has been quoted and explained above as we now turn our attention to lines 93-100 of the *Shoshin Ge*. Shinran Shonin composed the following verses in praise of Shan'tao (613-681 A.D.), a Chinese Pure Land Master. The following are the lines:

Shan'tao alone clarified
the true intent of
the Buddha Sakyamuni.
Out of compassion for
those who practice
meditative or
non-meditative good
as well as
those who commit
the five grave
offenses and
the ten transgressions,
He clarified that
the Light and the Name
are the cause
and the condition
for birth
in the Pure Land.
When aspirants are led
into the Sea
of Great Wisdom
of the Primal Vow
They are endowed
with faith, indestructible
as a diamond;
After attaining a single
thought of Joy
of oneness with
Amida Buddha,
They obtain
the three insights
as did Vaidehi,
And will realize
the Eternal Bliss
of Dharma-nature.
Hisao Inagaki.

The Way of Nembutsu. p. 121.

The line: *Shan'tao alone clarified the true intent of the Buddha Sakyamuni*, begins the second half of *Shoshin Ge* on a higher pitched liturgical intonation. This line proclaims that Shan'tao alone revealed the underlying significance of Amida Buddha, his Primordial Vow and his Sacred Name that was the ultimate goal of Sakyamuni's teachings. The apex of this teaching was reached through the understandings and further elaborations of Shan'tao's words finally by Honen Shonin and Shinran Shonin in Japan.

In his *Commentaries on the Meditation Sutra*, Master Shan'tao discusses the persons of King Bimbisara, his consort Queen Vaidehi, and especially their son Prince Ajatasatru, who, misled by the sinister Devadatta, commits the "five deadly transgressions." He starves his father to death and almost kills his own mother with his own sword. Thus, the *Mediation Sutra* speaks of the devastation and torment that physically emaciates the Queen Vaidehi to the point where she wishes for her own death. The Queen mother no longer wants to be in this world in which the son she

gave birth has brought her such unbelievable pain, too unbearable to endure.

The “five deadly transgressions” once again are: 1) to kill one’s one and only father, 2) to kill one’s one and only mother, 3) to kill an *arhat* (a person walking the Path to enlightenment), 4) to bodily injure a Buddha, an enlightened person and causing his blood to flow, and finally, 5) to cause disruption and divisiveness in a religious order by spreading rumors and falsehoods. The last two clearly implicate a person who deliberately disparages the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha and, thereby, also desecrates what is the Right *Dharma*. This also implies that those who doubt that Amida Buddha is the manifestation of the *Dharma*’s very Wisdom’s Light (*Amitabha*) and its all-embracing Compassion (*Amitayus*) are the very ones who become excessive and wasteful with the things of life, and, therefore, mindlessly and unknowingly are desecrating things that are sacred as well truths that are timelessly spiritual.

The “ten transgressions,” therefore, refer to man’s heartless, mindless acts of desecration, whether they are conscious or unconscious or unintentional or intentional. Such foolish and mindless thoughts, words and deeds produce real effects and affects whether they be intentional or not. The ten are 1) taking the lives of plants and creatures to consume them in order to survive; 2) taking and appropriating the possessions of others through devious and deceptive means; 3) committing impure, unwholesome sexual acts; 4) telling lies and falsehoods; 5) uttering harsh and abusive words to humiliate, torment and hurt others; 6) uttering innuendos and rumors that cause disunity and divisiveness between people; 7) engaging in idle talk and frivolous gossip; 8) being selfish and thinking only of one’s own benefits; 9) harboring anger, especially burning resentments and hatreds that can only explode in acts of uncontrollable rage, violence and bloodshed; 10) being blinded by misunderstandings, misconceptions, superstitions, dogmas and ideologies that have no real basis or validity.

Shan’tao’s admonishments to abstain from further commission of the “ten transgressions,” especially the “disparaging” of the Right *Dharma*,” were made because the *karmic* consequences that necessarily and especially follow such desecrations of the *Dharma* are much more serious and profound than that of the ten transgressions. In other words, each person must suffer the *karmic* consequences of their mistaken thoughts, abusive language, evil actions and especially their disparagements and desecrations of *Dharma* as long as the energy and the force are their effects and affects last.

Incredibly, even persons such as Devadatta who tried to kill his cousin Sakyamuni Buddha and Prince Ajatasatru who “starved his father King Bimbisara to

death and, in the process almost murdered his own mother with his own sword, these four principals in the *Meditation Sutra* were all seen by Shinran Shonin to be Bodhisattvas who took on the form of human beings to “mirror” and reveal the depths of his *karma*. This is why he saw them to be Buddha’s incarnations from the *Dharma* World appearing in various human forms in order to “enlighten” and “awaken” human beings as to their unfathomable *karmic* evils as documented in the tragedy that took place in the Kingdom in the great city of Rajagrha.

This acknowledgement and gratitude on the part of Shinran is found in his *preface* to his *Kyo Gyo Shin Sho* as follows:

... when the conditions for the teaching of birth in the Pure Land had matured, Devadatta provoked Ajatasatru to commit grave crimes. And when the opportunity arose for explaining the pure act by which birth is settled, Sakyamuni led Vaidehi to select the land of peace. In their selfless love, **these incarnated ones** – Devadatta, Ajatasatru, Vaidehi – **all aspired to save the multitudes of beings from pain and affliction**, and in his compassion, **Sakyamuni, the great hero, sought indeed to bless those committing the five grave offenses, those slandering the dharma, and those lacking the seed of Buddhahood**. We know, therefore, that the auspicious Name embodying the perfectly fulfilled supreme virtues is **true wisdom that transforms our evil into virtue**, and that the diamond-like-shinjin so difficult to accept is true reality that sweeps away doubt and brings us to attainment of enlightenment. [SBT-Series. *KGSS* Vol. I p. 57. In bold for focal emphasis].

This was why Shinran Shonin, in experiencing his “awakening of faith,” as did Queen mother Vaidehi, proclaimed:

How joyous I am, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Sakyamuni! Rare is it to come upon the sacred scriptures from the westward land of India and the commentaries of the masters of China and Japan, but now I have been able to encounter them. Rare is it to hear them, but already I have been able to hear. Reverently entrusting myself to the teaching, practice, and realization that are the true essence of the Pure Land way, I am especially aware, of the profundity of the Tathagata’s benevolence. Here I rejoice in what I have heard and extol what I have attained. [*loc. cite.*, pp. 58. 59]

This is why Shan’tao focused on the *Meditation Sutra* in which the innocent and pure Queen Vaidehi revealed

her wish to be "born" in a place where there were no such people who commit the "five unforgivable transgressions," the "ten transgressions," and especially people who keep "desecrations the Right *Dharma* do not exist."

The Buddha then sends two of his most accomplished disciples, *Mahamaudgalyana* and *Ananda* to console and comfort Queen Vaidehi who is suffering unbearable remorse and wishing to end her life. Sakyamuni Buddha himself, then, appears before Queen Vaidehi to explain the various ways of "en-visualizing" Amida Buddha, his Pure Land and its inhabitants in the West all radiating with the bliss of Tranquility and Serenity. Sakyamuni, then, finally reveals to Queen Vaidehi that the only thing sorrowful, unsavable *karma*-ridden persons can do to be saved is for them to utter and keep reciting the Sacred Name of Amida who has vowed especially to save such beings.

The Meditation Sutra ends with Sakaymuni Buddha telling Ananda: "Bear these words in mind. To bear these words in mind means "to hold fast to the Name of the Buddha *Amitayus*" [Hisao Inagaki. *The Three Pure Land Sutras*. p. 250.]. According to Shan'tao, penitence and repentance is a crucial element in "thinking of Amida Buddha" and "reciting his Sacred Name: *Namoh-amida-butsu*."

According to Hisao Inagaki, Shan'tao's contribution to Pure Land teachings was to lead people of horrendous depravities to "think of Amida" by simply "saying" and "reciting" *Namoh- amida-butsu*. Inagaki writes: "He first divided the Pure Land practices into two: "right acts" and "miscellaneous acts," and chose the five Right Acts as follows:

1. Chanting sutras: single-mindedly chanting such sutras as the Contemplation *Sutra*, the Smaller *Sutra* and the Larger *Sutra*.
2. Contemplation: concentrating on Amida and his Land of Bliss.
3. Worshipping: single-mindedly worshipping Amida.
4. Recitation: single-mindedly reciting the Name.
5. Praising and making offerings: single mindedly praising Amida and making offerings to him. [*loc. cite.*, p 126]

[to be continued]

BUDDHIST STORIES & PASSAGES

The fool who knows his foolishness is wise at least so far. But a fool who thinks himself wise, he is called a fool indeed. [Irving Babbit. *The Dhammapada*. P 12]

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What is *karma*?

ANSWER: *Karma* is the unseen power that each of us individually, and collectively as a society create and result in what are our thoughts, aspirations, words and deeds that keep shaping our destiny (think of the what former thoughts, motivations, rhetoric and actions of mankind have led to what is now the Gulf oil spill this is impacting the lives and ecosystems this yet have their repercussions on us all the world over). *Karma* involves the effects and affects that are being constantly produced by what we are thinking, feeling, desiring, saying and doing.

This exactly is why: "... **We must become aware of the evil nature lurking within ourselves, and live by helping others.** " [Yoshitaka Tamai. *Ichinyo*. pp. 98, 99 Bold for emphasis.]

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continued from p. 2

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