



# GASSHO

## February

### 2011

Issue No: 02-11

*"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"*



## THE SIX HERETICS

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

In past issues of GASSHO I have dealt with the tragic real life story about Prince Ajatasatru, son of King Bimbisara and Queen Vaidehi. Coming under the influence of sinister Devadatta, who desired to replace the aging Sakyamuni Buddha as the teacher and leader of the Buddhist Sangha, led Ajatasatri to usurp the throne of his father, King Bimbisara. Ajatasatru imprisoned and finally starved his father to death.

This story is recorded in the Meditation Sutra as the "Tragedy of Rajagriha" as follows:

...There was a prince named Ajatasatru in the great city of Rajagriha. At the instigation of his wicked friend, Devadatta, he arrested his father, King Bimbisara. He confined his father in a room surrounded by sevenfold walls and prohibited all ministers to enter the room. Kenjo S. Urakami. *Amida Buddha and His Pure Land: Three Sutras and One Treatise.* p. 127.

Since Queen Vaidehi was the devoted wife of King Bimbisara, the guards could not prevent her from secretly visiting her husband daily. In doing so, she smuggled food secretly smeared on her body and drink hidden in the hollows of her ornate crown and jewelry.

So when Prince Ajatasatru found out, he became very angry because she had defied his orders. His anger turned into an uncontrollable rage that he drew his sword and was about to cut down his own birth mother. If two faithful ministers had not stepped in between Prince Ajatasatru and Queen Vaidhehi to protect her with their hands ready to draw their own swords, the Queen would have been murdered by the hands of her own son. This episode is recorded in religious verse (*wasan* = *paen*) by Shinran Shonin as follows:

King Ajatasatru became angry  
and furiously enraged  
And did utter the words,  
"My mother is my enemy!"  
And, against the laws of the land  
attempted to kill her

## MONTH'S THOUGHT



Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, and imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch toward uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion? To make one-half the world fools and the other half hypocrites and to support roguery and error all over the earth. Thomas Jefferson. *Notes on the State of Virginia.* 1781-82.



By turning on her with  
his own sword drawn!

Jiva(ka) and Candraprabta then  
reasoned and admonished:  
"Such a wicked act would make you  
an untouchable, an outcaste!"  
"If you do such a thing we can  
no longer be serving you!"  
Thus Ajatasatru was persuaded  
not to carry out his intention!

**SHINSHU KYOKAI MISSION**  
1631 S. Beretania St.  
Honolulu, HI 96826  
email: [skm@flex.com](mailto:skm@flex.com)  
website: [www.shinshukyokai.org](http://www.shinshukyokai.org)

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
Permit No. 231

*Return Service Requested*

# REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY 2011

### 1st SUN FEB 6th:

9 A.M. Eng. Service  
Dharma Talk  
**NIRVANA DAY**  
For Children and Adults  
Rev. Tatsuguchi

### 2nd SUN FEB 13th:

9 A.M. Eng. Service  
Dharma Talk  
For Children and Adults  
Rev. Tatsuguchi

10.30 A.M.  
**Annual  
General Membership  
Meeting  
&  
New Year party**

### 3rd SUN FEB 20th:

9 A.M. Eng. Service  
Dharma Talk  
For Children and Adults  
Rev. Tatsuguchi

### 4th SUN FEB 27th:

MONTHLY  
FAMILY WORSHIP  
Dharma Talk  
For Children and 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

**HAWAII EISA CHIMUGUKURU DAIKO**  
Mr. Van Shimabukuro  
Wed/Thur 6.30-8.30

### *With Deepest Sympathy*

Mrs. Kikue Ishitani	88yr	Dec. 9, 2010
Mr. Megumi Muramoto	90yr	Dec. 16, 2010
Mr. Hisao Okamoto	95 yr	Dec. 21, 2010
Mrs. Mildred Fukunaga	89yr	Dec. 22, 2010
Mrs. Elaine A. Takata	83yr	Jan. 14, 2011
Mrs. Toshiko Amioka	89yr	Jan. 15, 2011

**THANK YOU FOR  
YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!!**

Jiva(ka) ready to draw his sword  
then retreated backwards.  
Whereupon, Ajatasatru let go  
of his sword, and instead,  
Confined Vaidehi in a palace.

*Jodo Wasans* No.s 75-77  
rkt trans.

These *wasans* of Shinran Shonin are based on this real life story.

In *Jodoshinshu*, three sutras are considered to be most central to its tenets of true faith. They are, in addition to the Meditation Sutra, *The Sutra on Buddha's Exposition on Immeasurable Life (Bussetsu Dai Muryo-ju Kyo)* or in short, the Larger Sutra, and *The Sutra on Buddha's Exposition on Amida Buddha (Bussestu Amida Kyo)*, the Smaller Sutra or simply *Amida-Kyo*. The Larger Sutra is the most important sutra because it tells of how a King Dharmakara became a Bodhisattva who set forth some Forty-eight Vows of Boundless Compassion and consummated them all to become Amida Buddha, the Buddha who saves all sentient beings, especially the karma-riddled ones, without discrimination and favoritism.

Now, in the Meditation Sutra Sakyamuni Buddha tells of Queen Vaidehi's lament and remorse in having born such a son as Ajatasatru (P. Ajatasattu) who had so cruelly starved her husband, King Bimbisara, to death. The King himself was one of Sakyamuni Buddha's earliest and most devoted followers. In this tragedy, Devadatta, Sakyamuni's cousin, is also involved. For his plan was to displace Sakyamuni as the head of the Sangha by duping Prince Ajatasatru into usurping his father's throne. Devadatta also tried to discredit Sakyamuni by spreading falsehoods about him. He even tried to kill Sakyamuni Buddha.

So Devadatta deceives Prince Ajatasatru into believing that his father tried to kill him as soon as he was born because of an astrologer's warning that as an adult his son would assassinate him. So, Devadatta convinces Ajatasatru to get rid of his father, saying Ajatasatru would be a better king than his father. The secret plan of Devadatta is that if Ajatasatru succeeds, then, he could get him to denounce and expel Sakyamuni from Rajagriha. Ajatasatru as King then could install him as the head of the Buddhist Sangha.

**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: January 26, 2011**

## WORDS OF SHINRAN

... 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 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. SBT-Series. *Letter of Shinran*. No. 2. p. 21.

Therefore Prince Ajatasatru arranges for his father's death by starvation. He imprisons his father in a dungeon and allows him no food or drink. Whereby, Queen Vaidehi keeps him alive by smuggling food and drink into his dungeon. When the Prince discovers that his mother is secretly bringing his father sustenance he, as mentioned, becomes incensed and full of rage. So, Ajatasatru, overcome by uncontrollable scorn for his mother, almost kills her with his own sword. If the two most trusted and faithful of his ministers, Jivaka and Candraprabta, had not stepped in between him and his mother and dissuaded him from committing such a heinous act, he would have been branded a *candala*, an untouchable and become an outcaste.

In the Meditation Sutra, Jivaka, a wise minister and physician, reasons, therefore, with Prince Ajatasatru as follows:

... Great King. We ministers hear that the Vedic Scriptures teach that from the beginning of the world the number of evil kings who killed their fathers out of craving for the throne have been eighteen thousand. But we have never heard of one who had become a deviant and harmed his mother. King, if you commit such a murder now, you will disgrace the Ksatriya caste (the social class of warrior kings). We ministers cannot stand to hear about this act which is that of a *candala* (an outcaste class of people). We cannot remain here any more. K. Urakami. *op. cite.*, p 139.

So saying, both Jivaka and Candraprabha, facing Prince Ajatasatru, retreat backwards with Queen Vaidehi safe behind their backs as they held onto their own swords, ready to draw them if necessary.

The Meditation Sutra then tells of the heart-broken Queen Vaidehi upon the death of King Bimbisara. Confined in her palace, she prays that Sakyamuni Buddha will come to her in her time of unbearable lament. Sakyamuni then suddenly appears before her. She then asks him as to why such a wicked son as Ajatasatru was born to her and her husband. Various

sutras give several reasons. In the Meditation Sutra selected by Honen Shonin, which Shinran Shonin also accepted, Queen Vaidehi's awakening and final emancipation is the focus. In this sutra Queen Vaidehi herself is led by Sakymuni Buddha finally to the "thought and visualization of Amida Buddha" (*Chien'po, J. nembutsu*).

In the sixteenth meditation in which persons of "the lowest rank of the lowest level" who "... are unable to follow any of the meditative or non-meditative practices as specified ..." in any of the upper and higher advanced levels of meditation, are led to just utter Amida's Sacred name. The Buddha advises Queen Vaidehi to simply "... recite [the name of] the Buddha of Infinite Life ..." The reason being that when people think of and say "... the name of Amida Buddha, ... they are 'enabled' to remove the transgressions produced over their past repeated lives over eight thousand million kalpas of time." (K. Urakami. *loc. cite.*, p. 161.)

Because of having committed the "ten vices," the "five heinous transgressions," and "desecrations of the Dharma," Prince Ajatasatru also finally becomes aware of the karmic gravity of having killed his father and almost his own birth mother. In another *sutra*, Ajatasatru himself is shown to be suffering not only the mental, moral and emotional consequences of his heinous deeds, but to have broken out in oozing sores and boils all over his body, the pain of which becomes progressively unbearable. The stench is also very offensive to all around him, except to his devoted, loving mother, who begins attending to them with the care only a mother can bestow on her child. But though his mother keeps cleansing his sores and applying medicine and though she keeps consoling to comfort him, her efforts and words are to no avail.

In the chapter on *Shinjin*, or Faith, in his *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way* (hereafter abbreviated as TTPR-PLW), Shinran quotes extensively from the Nirvana Sutra that focuses more on Ajatasatru's plight. His various ministers advise him to seek out six specific *sramanas*, or wandering spiritual ascetic teachers they themselves believe in. The teachings and practices of each of them are not that of Sakyamuni Buddha. Each of the six ministers begin urging the Prince, now King Ajatasatru, to seek relief through the *sramana* they themselves go to for advice and healing.

The *Samannaphala Sutta* (The Fruits of the Contemplative Life) relates how Ajatasatru, in doing so, fails to find a cure and the solace he seeks. The reasons are that all the teachings and practices advocated by these six teachers basically contradict the facts of causation, conditionality, interdependency, especially what are the consequences of karma.

Before we proceed, it is important for us to understand the term *sramana*. According to Dr. Hiralal Jain in his *Jainism in Buddhist Literature*, there were sixty-two non-Buddhist systems, or religious practices in the Buddha's time. The *Samannaphala Sutta*, according to him, is basically a criticism of these views and disciplines that were seen as heretical, mainly because they compromised or contradicted the facts of causation, conditionality, interdependency and especially the facts of karma. These non-Buddhist views were summarized as the six heresies of the six heretics.

According to Hiralal Jain, a *sramana* is a person who is a homeless wanderer who practices austerities and self mortification to escape the cycles of rebirth, misery, and repeated births and deaths. Evidently, there were as many homeless wanderers as there were individuals with varying inclinations and proclivities who pursued the homeless ascetic life. Therefore, also the number "sixty-two heretical systems" or wrong views. Jain says that a "... *sramana* is an ordinary monk belonging to any sect except perhaps to Brahmanas ..." because "... they challenged the authority of the Vedas," and unlike the Brahmins who held to a rigid caste system, the *sramanas* "... admitted into their church all members of the community irrespective of their social rank and religious career." The Brahmins, on the other hand, held to a rigid caste system which the Buddha also renounced.

Furthermore, in the *Sramana* literature that antedates the Vedas, "... each teacher preached his own way of salvation, the common goal which was to escape the life of suffering by breaking the cycle of rebirth." The key difference between the *sramanas* and the Brahmins was that the *sramanas* "... all agreed in one respect, namely, in discounting ritual as a means of emancipation and establishing a path of moral, mental and spiritual development as the only means of escaping from the misery of samsara." Such were the first five ascetics Siddhartha Gautama encountered upon his entering the homeless state when beginning his spiritual journey to enlightenment.

According to the Nirvana Sutra quoted by Shinran in his volume on Faith (*Shinjin* in TTPR-PLW Vol. II), the sixty-two non-Buddhist views were basically reduced to the six heretical philosophical systems. Each of Prince Ajatasatru's six ministers advised him to seek release and relief from their respective *sramanas*. The position of these six teachers basically summarizes all the sixty-two philosophical teachings into six basic systems that deny karma and causality. In brief the underlying views of these six *sramanas*, represent the six basic erroneous views as listed below.

The first minister recommended that Ajatasatru seek out Purana Kassapa. In essence, he taught that there was no such thing as causation or karma.

Everything, he said, happens by pure chance and accident. Therefore,

There is no black karma, no result of black karma; there is no white karma, no result of white karma. There is no black or white karma, no result of black or white karma. There is no superior karma, no inferior karma. (TTPR-PLW. Vol. II p. 282.)

This view clearly denies the facts of causation, especially the mental, verbal and physical consequences that follow one's thoughts, words and actions. So it denies that there are such things as karmic consequences to the "ten vices," the "five deadly transgressions," and "desecrations of the Dharma." So the reasoning is, if there are no good or bad karmic consequences, then, there are no transgressors. There are, as well, no consequences for even to the good things you may think, say, and do.

The second minister recommended Makkhali Gosala who founded an ascetic group called Ajivikas. He, like Kassapa, was a naked ascetic. However, as a fatalist he declared that "... there is neither cause nor basis ..." for anything. For people become pure or impure without cause or basis. He taught that all things are "... unalterably fixed ..." It seems that Sakyamuni Buddha considered Makkhali to be the most dangerous and meanest of all *sramanas* because of his belief that "... suffering and happiness ... do not depend on any cause or effect." His view, therefore, is an outright denial of karma. In other words, there is nothing any one can do to change things because everything is already fixed and pre-determined to happen. In other words you cannot prevent what is going to happen from happening. In this sense, he was a fatalist.

The third minister recommended Ajita Kesakambali who was a materialist. He was a person who saw only objects, or concrete reality. He preached, therefore, the doctrine of annihilation, or the curious view that there was nothing after death because the material body disintegrates back into the basic elements. He denied, therefore, that good and evil exist because mere objects or the basic elements that make up the body possess no sense of "right" and "wrong." Therefore, there also is no life after death because man merely disintegrates back to the basic four to seven elements from whence he originally was formed. When he dies, he returns to these basic elements, "... water to water, fire to fire, and air to air, while the sensations vanish into thin air. ..." In his view, nothing survives after death. Both sage and fool, said he, perish and turn into nothingness. In other words, it doesn't matter whether one is a "good" or "bad" person.

The fourth minister recommended Pakudha Kaccayana who taught that "No man slays or causes to slay, hears or causes to hear, knows or causes to

## SHINRAN'S WASAN

The ninety-five (wrong) views  
defile and corrupt the world!  
The only single correct path  
is the way of the Buddhas!  
For it's only in attaining Bodhi  
that beings in this "burning house"  
are naturally benefited!

*Shozomatsu Wasan* No. 12  
rkt trans.

know." He also believed that there were seven basic elements that were firm and stable and do not injure one the others. So he held the strange view that: "Even if a man cleaves another's head with a sharp sword, he does not take away life for the sword-cut passes cleanly through and between the seven elements without damaging them." According to Pakudha "... good or bad deeds," therefore, "do not affect the elements which are eternal.

The fifth minister recommended Sanjaya Belatthiputta who held to agnosticism. In other words, just because someone tells you that "there is another world" or "an afterlife" you should not "... say ..." nor "... deny..." that it is so or not so. In other words, it is best, said he, to suspend one's judgment in matters of speculation, such as in trying to answer such questions as "Is there a soul?" or "no soul?" For, trying to provide answers to such hypothetical questions is beyond human capacity and determination. Like the Buddha, he taught that "... it is best to divert one's energies and attention from fruitless inquiry and direct them towards mental equanimity." However, Sanjaya's position was criticized by Buddha because his arguments were like that of an "eel wriggler," for his arguments slipped in and out of difficult positions when a position should have been taken. In other words, Sanjaya was always evasive where he needed to be definite, or could have discussed and answered a question.

The sixth minister recommended Nigantha Nataputta who was a Jain who practiced nakedness and followed asceticism to its extremes. Anyone who destroys animate things, takes what is not given, passionately enjoys doing evil, speaks a falsehood, and imbibes alcoholic beverage, such a person, said he, is committing a sin. Therefore, any one who slays a living creature, steals, indulges in wrong sexual acts or tells a lie is a "condemned person," a person who cannot be saved.

In Jainism, non-violence is most fundamental as it is in Buddhism. Therefore, both Jainism and Buddhism teach that one should abstain from all forms of violence. However, in Jainism, the physical deed is

seen to be more blamable than the thought and intention behind it. That is, the act of violence is more important than the thought or intention behind it that triggers it. Therefore, if the hurt, harm or injury is caused by the body, such a concrete deed by the body is to be considered more blamable than the thought and intent of hurting or harming that triggered it. Thus, meat eating is completely prohibited in Jainism, more so than the desire for meat foods.

Jainism, like Buddhism, also teaches the Four Noble Truths. Both teach that "every being experiences the fruits of his good and bad deeds in the present or future life and rebirth continues till the person attains salvation. Both hold that the Universe came into being without intervention of a creator-God.

They are, however, certain fundamental differences between the two. Buddhism does not believe in an autonomous soul or a disembodied spirit that is detached and severed from one's psycho-physical person. However, in Jainism, the soul in its purity has to be freed from the body because it is full of impurities. This separation between the "pure soul" and the "defiled body" is essential to the attainment of salvation.

So, after seeking out all these non-Buddhist teachers, and unable to find relief from his sickness and, more fundamentally, relief from his internal despair and hopelessness, Prince Ajatasatru turns to his most faithful and trusted of ministers, Jivaka the wise physician, for guidance. He confesses his inner turmoil and remorse for having committed the "ten egregious offenses," the "five heinous transgressions" and especially of his "desecrations of the Dharma." Jivaka then is elated to hear Ajatasatru so penitent, remorseful and shameful.

King Ajatastaru now is expressing his heartfelt remorse and penitence, especially about having starved his father to death and of nearly murdering his own mother. In his great remorse, we see the critical difference between what it is to experience a genuine shame and penitence for one's misdeeds from that sense of guilt full of fear and foreboding concerning the possibility of one being condemned and cast into some kind of external hell. There is a difference between a shame full of remorse from a repentance full of guilt characterized by an uncertainty of being condemned to some kind of an eternal hell by some deity.

Jivaka, therefore, exclaims:

O excellent, excellent! Though the King has committed a crime, profound remorse has been stirred in his heart and he is filled with shame and self-reproach. ....

What Jivaka then says confirms what I have been saying about a faith that is sincere, true and real that "transforms" one's ingratitude into gratitude, irreverence into reverence and impertinence into penitence with a humility that fills one's heart with shame and self-reproach, and not with feelings of guilt with fears about a possibility of being condemned and punished by some Deity who casts sinners into some kind of everlasting fire.

Therefore, what Jivaka says is key to obtaining an understanding and clarification of Jodoshinshu faith. He says to Ajatasatru:

There are two good means by which sentient beings can be saved: one is shame and the other is self-reproach. Shame means not committing further evil oneself; self-reproach means not leading others to commit evil. Shame is to be abased within oneself; self-reproach is to express this outwardly, toward others. Shame means to feel humility before others; self-reproach means to feel humility before heaven. This is shame and self-reproach. To be without shame and self-reproach is not to be human; it is to be a beast. Because one feels shame and self-reproach, one reveres father, mother, teachers, and elders. Because one feels shame and self-reproach, it is taught that there is accord among father, mother, elder and younger brothers, and elder, and younger sisters. *ibid.*

So saying, Jivaka then tells Ajatasatru to seek out Sakyamuni Buddha, who can help him "... break through the karmic evils of sentient beings" with his "diamond-like wisdom."

Then out of the clear blue, Ajatasatru suddenly hears a "voice."

Great king, the person who commits one grave offense suffers fully the corresponding retribution for it. If he commits two grave offenses, the retribution is double. If he commits five, the retribution is five-fold. Great King, we know with certainty now that you cannot escape your evil acts. Pray, Great King, go quickly to the Buddha. Apart from seeing the Buddha, the World-honored one, there is no help. It is out of deep pity that I urge you to do so. TTPR-PLW. Vol. II p. 290.

Upon hearing these words Ajatasatru is struck with terror and his body begins to shudder and tremble. For the voice has come out of nowhere and there is no one to be seen. Then he hears the voice again: "Great King! It is your father Bimbisara. Let Jivaka's advice be heeded. Do not follow the words of the six ministers; their views are wrong." (*ibid.*)

Hearing these words of his father King who he starved to death, Ajatasatru faints and collapses to the ground. It is after that his body starts to break out in oozing sores that began spreading all over his body. The filth gets worse and the stench even becomes quite unbearable, and yet his mother, Queen Valdehi, lovingly tends to them and keeps comforting him.

Then, when Ajatasatru finally goes to see Sakyamuni Buddha, the Nirvana Sutra says:

... the World-honored one, the Guide of great compassion, entered the samadhi of moon-radiant love for the sake of Ajatasatru. The light, cool and refreshing, shone upon the body of the King, and the sores healed instantly. *loc. cite.* p. 292.

Then King Ajatasatru asks Jivaka to explain the mysterious healing powers of the samadhi moon-radiant love to which he replies:

The light of the moon causes all the blue lotuses to unfold in brilliant luminosity. Such is the samadhi of moon-radiant love, which causes sentient beings to open forth the good mind. This is why it is called the samadhi of moon-radiant love.

Great King, the light of the moon brings great joy of all travelers on the road. Such is the samadhi of moon-radiant love, which brings joy to the hearts of those in practice on the path of nirvana. This is why it is called the samadhi of moon-radiant love. ... It is the king of all good, it is sweet nectar. It is what all sentient beings love and aspire for. Therefore it is called the samadhi of moon-radiant love. ... *loc. cite.*, p. 294.

In having been grasped and embraced by Wisdom's Light of Selflessness and its Compassionate Luminations of All-embracing Togetherness in which all things and life are held in a timeless sacred harmony, Ajatasatru was finally able to say to Jivaka,

O Jivaka, I have now, even before dying, already attained the heavenly body. Casting off short life, I have gained endless life; abandoning the impermanent body, I have gained the eternal body. I bring sentient beings to the awakening of the mind aspiring for supreme, perfect enlightenment. *loc. cite.*, p 301.

This is why, according to Shinran Shonin, Ajatasatru, in actuality, represents each of us who, as he says, are fellow travelers and fellow seekers on the same road of life being led ultimately to Nirvana as we are illumined by the samadhi moon-radiant love or Amida's Light of

Wisdom and Life of Compassion that embraces all sentient beings without prejudices and favoritisms.

In understanding all the players in the Tragedy of Rajagriha, especially King Ajatasatru, Shinran Shonin composed the following *wasans*:

With Amida and Sakyamuni  
as expedient means,  
Ananda, Maudgalyana, Purna,  
Vaidehi, Devadatta,  
the Kings Ajatasatru and  
his father Bimbisara,  
Jiva(ka)and Candraprabha  
as well as Varsakara and others,

Great sages, each and all,  
guiding to lead us common,  
ignorant, and the lowliest  
of lowliest of men,  
By skillful and appropriate means  
to trust in the Vow that embraces  
even the heinous of evil doers  
and slanderers of the Dharma.

*Jodo Wasan No. 78, 79.*

rkt trans.

Shinran Shonin also quotes Fa-chao's words concerning the the Meditation Sutra to clarify the importance of saying and uttering the Sacred Name of Amida Buddha as follows:

A person of utter foolishness, committing the ten transgressions and the five grave offenses, has been sinking for long kalpas in the sea of birth-and-death, dwelling in the dust of blind passions; but when he says the Name of Amida even once, and thus attains the Pure Land, he becomes one with the dharma-body as suchness. TTPR-PLW. Vol I. p. 119.

Thus, these words bring out the true significance of Shinran's heart-moving words in the preface of his Kyo Gyo Shin Sho. They are,

... The universal Vow difficult to fathom is indeed a great vessel bearing us across the ocean difficult to cross. The unhindered light is the sun of wisdom dispersing the darkness of our ignorance. Thus, it is that, when 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 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.** *loc. cite.*, Vol I p. 57. Bold for emphasis.

Clearly, Shinran Shonin saw his own hopelessly karma riddled self clearly mirrored especially in the persons of Ajatasatru and Devadatta. To see the failings in others as one's very own is to see them as bodhisattvas manifesting the Dharma World's Selflessness and Togetherness helping us to see and acknowledge our own transgressions and desecrations. This then is the significance of Shinran's words as quoted above.

To be illuminated by the Dharma's Wisdom is to see one's true karma-ridden nature reflected in the Mirror of the Dharma's Selflessness softly revealing one's shortcomings and failings. To be luminated by the samadhi moon-radiant love of the Dharma's Boundless Compassion is, in the process, to be unconditionally embraced "just as the foolish person one is" by the Dharma's All-embracing Togetherness that equally embraces all sentient beings in an inseparable Sacred Oneness never to ever abandon or forsake any one of them! Such is the Dharma's Boundless Compassion.

## **BUDDHIST STORIES & PASSAGES**

There is no falsity in the Eternal Dharma which Buddha taught, for He knows all things in the world as they are, and he teaches them to all people.

Buddha alone truly and fully knows the world as it is and He never says that it is true or false, or good or evil. He simply portrays the world as it is.

What Buddha does teach is this: "That all people should cultivate roots of virtue according to their natures, their deeds, and their beliefs." This teaching transcends all affirmation and negation of this world. BDK. *The Teaching of Buddha*. (English/Japanese) p. 44.

## **QUESTION AND ANSWER KORNER**

QUESTION: How does Amida's "Mind of Sincerity" transform the minds of people plagued by blind passions and foolish vanities?

ANSWER: In the Chapter on the True Buddha and Land in Shinran's *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho*, the following passages from the Larger Sutra are quoted by Shinran as follows:

Sentient beings who encounter this light have the three defilements swept away, and they become soft and gentle in body [actions] and mind [thoughts and feelings]. They dance with joy, and the good mind arises in them. When those suffering pain and travail in the three evil courses [living like brute animals, hungry ghosts, and demonic persons] see this light, they all find respite and are freed of afflictions. After their lives have ended, they gain emancipation. ... SBT-Series. *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way*. Vol. III. pp. 396-397. [ ]s mine.

The three defilements are represented by the "proud prancing rooster" crowing its vanities and superiority over others, the "wild black boar" groveling and wallowing in its insatiable "belly" and "genital" appetites, and the "slithering viper" ever spewing the venoms of ill will and hatreds that poison others with feelings and thoughts of resentment, hatred, violence and even acts of bloodshed resulting in unnecessary and premature death.

#