



# GASSHO

## MARCH

2010

Issue No:03-10

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



### WHO'S "EXCLUDING" WHO?

(*Shoshin Ge* lines: 25-28)  
rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

This month's *GASSHO's* focus will be on the question: If Amida's Primal Vow saves both the 'good person' and especially more so the 'evil person' [*Tannisho* II], why then were the words: "those who commit the five deadly transgressions and slander the Dharma are excluded" included in both the Consummated Vow of Amida and his Primordial Vow?

The key in understanding why this contradictory clause was included is to realize that these "words of exclusion" had to be included in order to "awaken" those who still are unknowingly committing the five deadly transgressions and disparaging the Right Dharma, and that they, in doing so, are the very ones who are excluding themselves from becoming beneficiaries of Amida Buddha's Great Compassion that does not discriminate between those who are "good" and "evil" because Amida's Compassion is Unconditional and All-embracing. [T. Unno. *Tannisho*. I]. It is not Amida, therefore, who is rejecting them but the mistaken thoughts, willfulness and misdeeds of such persons that in actuality, are keeping them from trusting and taking refuge in Amida Buddha.

Should the "exclusion clause" be misconstrued as Amida accepting only "good persons" and rejecting "evil persons," then this would make Amida to be no different from a Supreme Deity who rewards the "righteous and faithful" who, in turn, punishes to reject those who are "unrighteous and unfaithful." Such is the God of the Semitic religions who selects the "good person" to accept him into his "Kingdom of Righteousness" while casting out the "evil person" into some kind of everlasting fiery inferno [Matt. 13: 40-50].

I hope, therefore, to show that the "torments" that one endures because of the consequences of one's past karma that shackles a person to the repeated rounds of births and deaths in the "six realms of transmigration" is different from that of "sinners" who, on a day of God's final judgment, are to be cast into a "furnace of eternal fire and brimstone." For the torments and suffering in the "three lower hellish realms of transmigration," according to Buddhism, continue as

### MONTH'S THOUGHT



According to [some teachings] good is practicable only after the eradication of evil. This is like trying to dispel the darkness first in order to let the light in." [Gojun Shichiri (quoted in D. T. Suzuki's *Collected Writings on Shin Buddhism*, Shinshu Otaniha, 1973)



long as the effects and affects of a person's past *karmic* evils keep fueling the cycle of repeated births and deaths. Due to the uniform, orderly processes of causation, as long as the *karmic* effects of one's negative thoughts, volitions, words and deeds continue, the inevitable force and affects of their *karmic* consequences continue to bring about torment and suffering.

The effects of a person's *karmic* evils, for example, can be likened to a flame burning on the wick of a candle that at the same time is melting the very wax that fuels it as long as the candle itself lasts. The flame burns until all of the candle's wax has melted and has been spent. As long as the candle exists the flame on the wick keeps burning because of the wax that keeps melting, which in turn keeps fueling the flame. This analogy is true

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# REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SERVICES FOR MARCH 2010

### 1st SUN Mar 7th:

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

### 2nd SUN Mar 14th:

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

### 3rd SUN Mar 21st:

**Spring O'Higan Service**  
9 A.M. Eng. Service  
Guest Speaker:

### 4th SUN Mar 28th:

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

=====  
*With Deepest Sympathy  
to the  
Families of*

*Mr. Melvin Tsutsui 63yr Jan 17, 2010*

*Mr. Torao Takata 88yr Feb 5, 2010*  
=====

## 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

SKM General Membership Meeting

**PRIZE WINNERS**  
T.V. Randall Mukai  
All purpose cooking pots:  
James Okihara, Jarret Okihara  
Rice Cooker: Helen Ito

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*continued on page 8...*

for human experiences that are pleasurable and rewarding as well as for those those that are unpleasant, unbearable and painful. Both pleasure and pain keep triggering positive reactions or negative responses from us as long as we are breathing and alive! All of existence, animate or inanimate, therefore, are governed by the orderly, uniform, necessary and irrevocable processes of causality, conditionality, interdependency, and in the case of us human beings, especially by the effects of our *karma* or volitions or the choices and decisions we have made. This means that each thing is dependent, connected and inseparable from all other things that sustain and support its very survival, especially as they affect the sense organs and the brain of sentient beings.

In this issue we will concern ourselves, therefore, as to why the “exclusion clause” was uttered by Dharmakara as an aspiring Bodhisattva who finally became Amida Buddha. Dharmakara, if you remember, was an aspirant who vowed to attain perfect enlightenment in order to save especially all “unsavable sentient beings” without exceptions because of their irreversible karma because of their past transgressions and willfull desecrations of the Right Dharma. For this very reason Dharmakara vowed that he would not enter the Ultimate Nirvana and accept the Buddhahood he was fully entitled to until the last “unsavable person” had been saved from their seemingly endless rounds of torments and suffering (See Vows 1 and 2). So why did Dharmakara as a “Buddha-to-be” say that those who commit the “five deadly transgressions” and “slandered the Dharma” are excluded?

To show how the English translations of the Eighteenth Vow varies with the translator, the following are quoted:

‘If the beings of the ten quarters – when I have attained Bodhi—blissfully trust in me with the most sincere mind, wish to be born in my country, and think (*one to*) *ten times*, and if they are not so born, may I never obtain the Highest Perfect Knowledge! **Excluded, however, are those who have committed the Five Deadly Sins and who have abused the Right Dharma.** (Kosho Yamamoto. *Shinshu Seiten*. pp. 19, 20)

If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten directions who sincerely

## WORDS OF SHINRAN

The person who commits the five grave offenses is burdened with evil karma, in fact, tenfold eight-billion kalpas of evil karma; hence, he is urged to say namu-amida-butsu ten times. It is not that the evil karma of tenfold eight-billion kalpas cannot be extinguished in a single utterance; but in this way, we are made to realize the seriousness of the evil karma of the five grave offences. SBT-Series. Notes on ‘Essentials ...’ p. 51, 52.

and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and call my Name even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. **Excluded, however, are those who commit the five gravest offences and abuse the right Dharma.** (Hisao Inagaki. *The Three Buddhist Sutras*. p. 243)

I will not accept perfect enlightenment, unless when I attain Buddhahood, people of the ten directions, who sincerely believe, rejoice and wish to be born into my land and who meditate on me [or recite my name] up to ten times, are able to be born in my land. **Only those who commit the five terrible crimes and slander the Right Dharma are excluded.** (Rev. Kenjo Urakami. *Three Sutras and One Treatise*. p. 27. bold to point out exclusion clause)

If, when I attain Buddhahood, all sentient beings in the ten directions who recite my name even ten times with sincere mind, faith serene, and wish birth in my country are not born there, may I not attain the supreme and greatest Enlightenment. **Only those who commit the five perversities are excluded.** (Rev. Eiken Kobai’s trans.)

What these translations have in common is the “exclusion clause” that seemingly contradicts the Vow of Amida to especially save “evil persons who are unable to save themselves.” The real intent of these words, as already mentioned, is to point out that it is not Amida but the person himself or herself who continues to mindlessly commit “transgressions” and “desecrations the Right Dharma” who, in reality, are preventing themselves from becoming beneficiaries of Amida Buddha’s unwavering kindness. They themselves are the ones who are keeping themselves from becoming imbued by Amida’s Wisdom and Compassion that can “transform” their ingratitude and impertinence into a life of gratitude and penitence, a life full of joy and gladness without any fears, anxieties, doubts, or baseless superstitions.

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Shinran Shonin in his *Kyo Gyo Shin Sho* quotes, therefore, both the Eighteenth Vow and the Consummated Vow. In both Vows the “exclusion clause” are found as follows:

If, after I have attained Buddhahood, the sentient beings in the ten quarters who have Sincere Mind, Serene Faith, and Desire to be Born in my country, should not be Born, even with ten utterances (of the Nembutsu), may I not attain Perfect Enlightenment – **excepted are those who have committed the five deadly sins and abused the Right Dharma.**

If all sentient beings, hearing the Name and having joy in Faith even once – through the Buddha’s sincere endowment – desire to be born in His Land, they can instantaneously obtain Birth and dwell in the Non-retrogressive State – **excepted are those who have committed the five deadly sins and abused the Right Dharma.** [Ryukoku Translation Series. *Kyo Gyo Shin Sho*. p. 107. [ ] mine. Bold to indicate the “exclusion clause.” p. 90]

What then was the “true intent” of Dharmakara in having uttered these words of exclusion? For they seem to contradict also the words of Shinran Shonin who said that when we become Buddhas, we:

“... will save those bound closest to us through transcendental powers, no matter how deeply they are immersed in karmic suffering of the six realms of existence and the four modes of birth.” Taitetsu Unno. *Tannisho*. V p 10.

This conviction of Shinran was based on his understanding of Amida’s Primordial Vow and its consummation as quoted above that assures the final enlightenment of all beings. This is why he concluded: “... Thus even the good person attains birth in the Pure Land. How much more so the evil person [*ibid.*, p 8]

Shinran Shonin gives us a further and deeper understanding as to why the “exclusion clause” was included in both the Primordial and Consummated Vows as follows:

The Buddha predicted that there will be people who shall entrust themselves to this dharma and people who shall slander it. I have already entrusted myself to the dharma, and there are those who slander it – by this we know that the Buddha’s words are true. In fact, we should realize that our birth is even more firmly settled. If contrary to this, no one denounced the nembutsu, we might wonder why there are no slanderers, even though there are believers. But this, of course, does not mean that the teaching should necessarily become the object

of slander. The Buddha taught this because he knew that both those who entrust themselves and those who slander would exist. His teaching was designed to dispel any doubts that might arise in us. [Taitetsu Unno. *Tannisho* XII. P 21]

Thus, to trust in Amida Buddha according to Shinran Shonin is to “ ... simply receive the words of my dear teacher, Honen, ‘Just say the nembutsu and be saved by Amida,’ and entrust (yourself) to the Primal Vow. Besides this, there is nothing else.” [T. Unno. *op. cite.* II p. 6. ( ) mine].

Such an “absolute trust” and “taking of refuge” in Amida Buddha’s Benevolence that “transforms” even the most heinous of transgressors and slanderers of the Dharma into persons of gratitude and penitence, such a thought, of course, is beyond human understanding and defies all common sense and human perceptions of justice. Such a religious doctrine that especially concerns itself with the salvation of “evil doers,” such a doctrine is the most difficult thing for us who subscribe to the conventional norms of justice that punishes law breakers and executes heinous criminals. A religion not based on such a system of justice indeed is most difficult to understand. In other words, for people who deny that they themselves are *karma* riddled beings, they themselves are unknowingly desecrating the very things of life that are sacred and spiritual. For they tend to see themselves as being in the “right” while they see others to be “evil and in sin.” Therefore, such people are not “aware” that unknowingly they are “slandering” the Dharma and are mindlessly committing evils that defy the Truth of Selflessness and the Reality of Togetherness. In doing so they are not even aware of the fact that they are hurting and harming others in their denials of the facts of causality, conditionality, interdependency and especially the consequences of their thoughts, words and actions.

What then are the five most horrendous things a human being can do? According to Sakyamuni Buddha they are: first, to kill one’s one and only father; second, to kill one’s one and only mother; third, to kill an *arhat* (a religious person worthy of our reverence and offerings). It is to be noted that the Buddhist precept “not to kill” involves much more than taking the life of living things. More profoundly, it involves the killing of a person’s aspirations, feelings, spirituality and potentials. We see this in the lives of the socially, economically, politically, educationally and legally disadvantaged in which their sense of self integrity and dignity is trampled upon.

The fourth “deadly transgression” is to do “bodily harm” to a Buddha (an “enlightened” person) by inflicting injuries that cause him to bleed. And finally, the fifth which is to premeditatively disrupt a Buddhist Sangha in trying to gain control over it, such as Devadatta attempted in trying to unseat Sakyamuni

Buddha as the head of the Buddhist Brotherhood and Sisterhood.

Now, "slandering" the Right *Dharma* also involves verbal and physical acts that disparage and desecrate the *Dharma* (Truth of Selflessness - Reality of Togetherness). More profoundly, this also involves denying, doubting and defying the fact that there is no thing, possession, or person that is immune to impermanence and karma. Therefore, the fact that nothing remains sufficient unto itself causes a person to become attached to his weathered possessions to an obsessive degree. To deny such a truth is to reject of the truth of impermanence. For such a self-obsessed person thinks and assumes that there will always be a tomorrow for him. To "slander" the *Dharma* also means to "desecrate" the very sacredness of living and non-living things, which is also to deny their very spirituality and their potential for growth and improvement, and therefore their progressing to their Buddhahood.

In his Chapter on True Practice in his *KGSS*, Shinran Shonin quotes passages from the *Sutra of the life of the Buddha* that confirm that Amida's All-embracing Compassion embraces all beings, especially those who are unsavable as follows

Amida Buddha, in his causal stage, made the universal Vow;

**When beings hear my Name and think of me, I will come to take them to my land;**

Not discriminating at all between the poor and the rich and wellborn;

Not discriminating between the inferior and the highly gifted;

Not choosing the learned and those upholding pure precepts;

**Nor rejecting those who break precepts and whose evil karma is profound;** When beings **just turn about at heart** and **often say the nembutsu,**

**It is as if bits of rubble were turned into gold.** [SBT-Series. *KGSS*. pp. 117-118.]

The passages set in bold confirm Shinran Shonin's understanding as to how Amida Buddha transforms the minds and hearts of "evil persons" when they "merely say and recite his Sacred Name: *Namoh-amida-butsu*. In doing so, Shinran Shonin himself came to realize that he, on his own moral and religious efforts, could never fathom the depths to his own *karmic* evils nor the extent to his desecrations of the *Dharma* ever since beginningless time. This was because "...he was incapable of knowing the Height of the Tathagata's benevolence that had transformed his karmic transgressions and desecrations "... as if bits of rubble were turned into gold." [T. Unno. *Tannisho.Epilogue* p 36. [ ] mine.]

## SHINRAN'S WASAN

Because of (Amida's) Vow:  
*If they are not so born!*"

The opportune time  
to awaken the Faith  
serene and assuring  
is now at hand!

In those who the  
"one-thought of Joy"  
is awakened,

Their birth (in the Pure Land)  
Is settled and a certainty!

*Jodo Wasan 26*  
rkt trans.

Thus, in his *Shoshin Ge*, Shinran Shonin makes it clear that people upon "realizing" that they unknowingly have, are and yet are committing the "five deadly transgressions" and "disparaging the Right Dharma" instantly in that moment they become grasped never to be abandoned by Amida! For this because reason they are karma riddled beings, they are the very ones, upon being grasped and embraced by Amida's Inconceivable Wisdom and Inexplicable Compassion, become persons who are never condemned and cast out as outcasts. Such a joy and assurance then comes from becoming so "settled in the Right Established State." Such a Mind of Assurance is beyond human comprehension and explanation. Such a transformation of a person's uncertainty into certainty can be understood somewhat through the analogy of a river's polluted waters full of toxins and debris, upon slowly but surely flowing back into the boundless waters of the ocean becoming at once its very free flowing currents. In this analogy, the ocean is the Dharma Ocean, the polluted river waters are our selves full of blind passions and foolish vanities.

The significance of this transformation by power of true faith is found in the following lines of the *Shoshin Ge* (25-28). Here are some translations of these verses:

In a Single Thought of Joy is awakened in one's mind,

Though passions are not severed, he will attain Nirvana,

When **ordinary men, sages, graves sinners, and abusers of Dharma**

are all converted,

They are like various waters turned into one taste on entering the sea

[BCA *Shinshu Seiten*. p. 143]

Kosho Yamamoto sensei's rendition is as follows:

Having the **Five Grave Sins** sinned

Or sinned **the sins to abuse**  
**The Dharma Right**, the right view;  
To us all sadly destined.

To all Light cometh; all gain  
Bodhi, like as the waters  
That carry down things divers  
And meet as brine in the main.

[*Shinshu Seiten*. p. 180]

Hisao Inagaki sensei's translation of the same stanzas is:

If the single thought of Joy and Gratitude is  
awakened in us,  
We shall realize Nirvana without severing our  
blind passions.  
When **ordinary people** and **sages** as well as  
**abusers of the Dharma** are taken  
into the Vow,  
They become one in spiritual attainment, just  
as many rivers become of one taste upon  
entering the sea. [*The Way of Nembutsu-Faith: A  
Commentary on Shinran's Shoshinge*. p.33]

Once again, depending on the translator, we see how  
the original verses can be rendered in different ways.

The point to be made here is that a person's  
passions (thoughts, feelings, motivations, and  
willfulness), "without being severed "(negated or  
obliterated), are "transformed" just as they are by the  
power of Amida's Wisdom and her virtues of  
Compassion. This point concerning Jodoshinshu faith  
once again is to be especially noted as being a key  
difference from the faith that is required in the  
Abrahamic religions. The "transformative power of  
Wisdom's faith" as understood in Jodoshinshu is further  
clarified yet through the analogy of a "green bitter  
persimmon" becoming a "ripe sweet persimmon." The  
"bitterness" in the green persimmon begins turning into  
"sweetness" by virtue of "the dawning sunlight" that  
begins to "ripen" and "mellow" it through each day's  
sunlight. The green persimmon keeps ripening until it  
becomes a mellow, sweet, ripe persimmon. In this  
ripening process, the persimmon itself is not being  
reduced into ashes or destroyed. Nor is it being  
"converted" into something else such as an apple or  
an orange. It's the very bitterness itself that is  
transformed into its very sweetness.

The analogy of waves to an ocean has also  
been used to depict "the ceaseless cycles of births and  
deaths" which is likened to an "Ocean of Repetitive  
Endless Births and Deaths" from which all things keep  
emerging like the waves constantly "appearing" to then  
return and "disappear" back into the ocean only to  
appear and disappear again and again. Each birth is  
likened to a wave appearing from the Ultimate Source  
of all things which is the Ocean of Dharma that has no

beginning or ending. Each death is likened to a wave  
returning to disappear back into the same Ocean of  
Dharma from which it emerged. Thus the hymnal,  
"There is no death all nature cries, the rose will reappear,  
more perfect will its petals be ..." indicating that the  
Buddhist view of life and death is that in which one life  
keeps connecting to all other lives like waves one after  
the other, reaching and rolling up on a shore to then  
only return back into the sea from whence it came as  
have all waves before and coming after it!

The ultimate goal in Buddhism is to reach the  
Other Shore of Supreme Enlightenment and then to  
return again to this world as a fully enlightened Buddha  
to lead other waves back to the Shore of Enlightenment.  
The waves ceaselessly appearing and reappearing are  
like "sentient beings" in their upward journey through  
repetitive births and deaths until they finally reach to  
wash up on the Other Shore of Ultimate Enlightenment.  
The boundless, unfathomable Ocean whose Farther  
Shore to be reached is the Ultimate World of *Nirvana*.  
This world of Enlightenment is beyond human  
explications and understandings. In Jodoshinshu it is  
the Pure Land.

Shinran Shonin, therefore, makes it undeniably  
clear that it is not Amida Buddha who is excluding  
"transgressors" and "slanders," for they too are also  
like any other wave emerging from the self same Ocean  
of Ceaseless Births and Deaths. The only problem is  
that the waves of transgression and desecration are  
heading in the wrong direction away from the Other  
Shore that is called "Nirvana without residues." They  
keep washing up on one of the shores of the "six  
realms of transmigration."

Therefore, it is because of their own denials,  
pride, presumptions and foolishness that transgressors  
of life and desecrators of *Dharma* Truth are the very  
ones who continue to "shut" themselves out from the  
Light and Life of Amida Buddha that can bring them  
Joy and Serenity even as they now live in  
transmigration. Nevertheless, Amida's Clear Light and  
Life of Purity steadily and unfailingly keep shining  
on them to embrace them all as does the sun shining  
equally on those who are blind and mute as well as  
those who can see and hear. The spiritually blind and  
mute, however, are like those who keep transgressing  
and desecrating the Dharma Sun shining on each and  
every sentient being without any favoritisms. The blind  
are unable to see and acknowledge the rays of the  
Dharma Sun because they are without sight. A mute is  
unable to hear the sounds of the Dharma Wind though  
he can see its gentle breezes swaying a tree's branches.  
A mute can see the birds of the forest, but cannot  
hear the sounds of their chirpings and song. A person  
who is both blind and mute can do neither. Such then  
is the plight of those who continue to commit the five  
deadly transgressions and who keep desecrating the  
Dharma for they are unable to "see" or "hear" the

Dharma though they are touched by it. According to Jodoshinshu man is both morally blind and spiritually mute.

The reason why human beings are morally blind and spiritually mute is explained by Shinran Shonin as follows:

All the **ocean-like multitudinous beings**, since the beginningless past, have been transmigrating in the **sea of ignorance**, drowning in the cycle of existence ["six realms of transmigration], bound to the cycle of sufferings, and having no pure, serene faith. They have, as of natural consequence [*karma-vipaka*], no true serene faith [peace of mind]. Therefore, it is difficult to meet the highest virtue and difficult to receive supreme, pure Faith. All the **common and petty persons** at all times **constantly defile their good minds with greed, and lust, and their anger and hatred constantly burn the treasure of Dharma**. Even though they work and practice as busily as though they were sweeping fire off their heads, their practices are called **poisoned** and mixed good deeds and also called **deluded** and **deceitful** practices; hence, they are not called true acts. **If one desires to be born in the Land of Infinite Light with these deluded and poisoned good, he cannot possibly attain it.** [Ryukoku Translation Series. *Kyo Gyo Shin Sho*. p. 107. [ ] mine. Bold to indicate blind and muted nature of transgressors and abusers.]

Even in our times of modernity, this assessment of Shinran Shonin remains a fact. That this is even so today even in our times of advanced civilization, this is sad. We see and hear daily of man's arrogance, impudence, greed, deviousness, stupidity and vanities over mass media as human beings keep transgressing and desecrating life and the very land that sustains them all over the face of this earth.

This is why Shinran Shonin quoted the *Nirvana Sutra* as follows:

O Kasyapa, there are three kinds of men whose illnesses are difficult to cure. First, (those who) abuse the Mahayana (teaching); secondly, (those who have committed) the five deadly sins; and third, the *icchantikas*. These three illnesses are the most serious in the world. None of them can be cured by *Sravakas*, *Pratyekabuddhas*, or *Bodhisattvas*. . . ." [*op. cite.*, p 133]

An *icchantika* is an "incurable person" who keeps "committing the five deadly transgressions," and therefore, thinks nothing of disparaging or desecrating the Right *Dharma*. As long as he continues to do so,

an *icchantika*, because of undeniable facts of causation, conditionality and *karma*, continues to exclude himself from becoming a "beneficiary" of Amida's Great Compassion. A *Sravaka*, on the other hand, is a person who is so busy "listening" to the Dharma teachings full time that he has no time for others. A *Pratyekabuddha* is a person who has found "enlightenment," but is unable to share its benefits fully with others. According to Shinran Shonin's assessment, both "ordinary people" and "sagacious people" are basically all too human in that even the person of knowledge is characterized by insatiable greed, hidden resentments and self vanities in the most subtle and disarming of ways imaginable.

And yet Shinran Shonin made it clear that it are such incurably blind and mute persons who can be cured by just saying *Namoh-amida-butsu* which is for them to simply take complete refuge in the powers and virtues of Amida's Sacred Name that then permeates their blinded minds with the Truth of Selflessness and their muted hearts with the Reality of a Togetherness that brings them a Peace of Mind full of joy and gratitude especially penitence and humility. The Sacred Name is the antidote that neutralizes the three deadly poisons of insatiability, hatred and arrogance. This antidote is already available just for the asking by sincerely saying *Namoh-amida-butsu*. All one has to do is to recite Amida's Sacred Name in all sincerity, steadfastness and faith with a gratitude free of all doubts and fears of being rejected or abandoned by some angry, wrathful deity. Such a mind of serene, fearless faith is called *makoto no kokoro*, a heart full of serenity and tranquility characterized by the virtues of humility and penitence full of joy and happiness.

This is why Shinran Shonin said:

Hereupon, according to the true teachings of the Great Sage, if the three kinds of beings who are difficult to save and those who have the three kinds of illnesses difficult to cure trust in the Universal Vow of Great Compassion and take refuge in the ocean-like Faith of the Other Power, Amida Buddha pities and cures them. It is like the excellent medicine of *manda* which cures all illnesses. All beings of the defiled world and wicked multitudinous beings should seek the indestructible, Adamantine True Mind and should take the excellent medicine of *manda* of the Original Vow. This we should know. [*ibid.*]

It appears that in the times of ancient India the "thickest part" of milk called *manda* was utilized for various medicinal purposes in curing a variety of sicknesses. Thus, the analogy of Amida's Sacred Name to be like *manda* with medicinal and curative properties.

This is why Yuiembo noted that Shinran Shonin constantly said:

"When I ponder on the compassionate vow of Amida, established through five kalpas of profound thought, it was for myself Shinran, alone. Because **I am a being burdened so heavily with karma**. I feel even more deeply grateful to the Primal vow which is decisively made to save me." [T. Unno. *op.cite. Epilogue* p. 35 Bold to emphasize that in Jodoshinshu faith, one, though burdened by karmic evils, is, for this very reason, is an undeserving beneficiary of Amida's Great Compassion.]

By now, it should be clear that Shinran Shonin saw himself undeniably as a person of profound transgressions and desecrations of the Dharma war since a beginningless, unknowable past. Such a "seeing" is to "see" also into the lives of one's endless line of ancestors and also into the lives of one's children and their children and their children's children yet to be born into an endlessly unfolding future. This is why Shinran Shonin was conferred the posthumous Buddhist name: *KEN' SHIN*, a person who "sees," has "seen" and continues to "see" the Truth of the past, present and future!

[To be continued]

## BUDDHIST STORIES & PASSAGES

*The Dai Chido Ron* says ... "When Sakyamuni was about to enter Parinirvana, he spoke to the Bhiksus and Bhiksunis, 'From this day on, depend not on discrimination; depend on the sutras that completely reveal the Buddhist principle, not on the sutras that do not completely reveal the Buddhist principle'" [Ryukoku Trans. Series. *Kyo Gyo Shin Sho* p. 200]

## QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: Hell is often mentioned in the scriptures. What kinds of evil karma causes a person to fall into hell?

ANSWER: Hisao Inagaki sensei's reply is as follows. "The five gravest offenses are described in the sutras as the cause of falling into hell. They are: killing one's own father, killing one's own mother, killing an arhat (a Hinayana sage), hurting the Buddha's body with an evil intention, and disrupting the harmony of the sangha."

Even if you have not committed any of those heinous acts by power and virtue of Wisdom's very Light, you will come to realize in the course of your reflections on your unfathomable past that you have been complicit in having committed such grave offenses individually and collectively in the most subtle and most unfathomable of ways. Shinran in coming to this "awakening" is quoted in the *Tannisho* (chapter 2) to

have exclaimed: "Since I am incapable of any practice whatsoever, hell is definitely my dwelling anyway." Charles Darwin, on the other hand, in observing how one life in order to survive and reproduce its species has to keep feeding on countless other lives. This fact of evolution confirms the reality that all of existence is engaged in the struggle for self-survival. Darwin then came to realize the truth and actuality that we human beings are also doing the same in order to survive, live and continue the human species. Carl Gustav Jung put it more directly - "We're no different from our mammalian cousins. We have to eat, sleep, move, procreate and go to the toilet like any other mammal!" Those observations also characterize the "Six Realms of Transmigration" wherein the person that one loves the most is one's own self.

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*to be continued next month...*