

Nichiren Shu Buddhist Temple of UK Newsletter

The King of Hell “Enma the Great”

Buddhism is a teaching for compassion and peacefulness. Thus, there are many benevolent Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Gods. However, there are some people who think, “Buddhism is a compassionate teaching and although we violate the Buddhist precepts there is no one to impart a punishment.”

What do you think? Let us think about this together. There is the teaching of Karma in Buddhism, even though there is no one who imparts punishments. As you know, “Karma” is the “Law of Cause and Effect”. If you do good things, the virtue will go around and return to you and your family as good effects. If you do bad things, the retribution will return not only to you, but also your family. The wheels of Karma rotate permanently whether you are aware of it or not. Sometimes the retribution is not only caused by your Karma but also your family, relatives or ancestors. You inherit all, good things and bad things from them as inheritance. If our ancestors karma was bad, it will make a lot of trouble for us. Hence, although Buddhas do not impact a punishment on you, with our own bad Karma we punish ourselves for a long time. Therefore, Buddhism is the teaching to remove the bad Karma and improve your life for a happy life. Nichiren Shonin said, “Our virtues or vices in our past can be seen in our present fortune; our future fortune can be seen in our present actions.”

In fact, most of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Deities in Buddhism are compassionate but there is one God who is very fearful. People who know, know of “Enma the Great”; the King of Hell. He is commonly called “Enma-san”. He impacts judge the deceased who committed misdeeds or gave trouble to others severely, and they go to hell. Enma-san is very popular as a fearful God. In Japan there was a custom to scold mischievous children. When a child lied, their parents gave them a lecture and would say, “Your lying tongue will be pulled out by Enma-san!” or when a child was bad, “Enma-san will get you and take you to Hell”. I remember that in my childhood, I feared Enma-san’s story very much. Enma-san is a symbol of a very scary God not only for children but for adults too.



Nichiren Shonin said: “In our fleeting life, you cling to temporary pleasures day and night and spend every day in vain. You do not care about the reverence of the Buddha, the teachings and praying for your parents and ancestors. You spend every day in routine work uselessly, without any Faith. After death how are you going to excuse your life before Enma King of Hell? How are you going to get to the peaceful Buddha world through crossing the deep seas of suffering?”

Enma-san originated from India and the Sanskrit name is “Yama-Raja”. He is the King of Hell and He, as the General Manager of the underworld, judges the deceased’s behaviour when they were alive and He judges which world the deceased should go to – Hell, Gaki, the Real World or the Pure-Land of Mount Sacred Eagle. His looks: He has a wrathful red face, his eyes are big and glare at the deceased sharply, his nose is big and sharp and He has a thick black beard. His body is big and tough. He wears a red robe and a crown on his head. He has a thick sceptre in his right hand and judges the deceased with the sceptre in the Enma court. In the court there are two scary, red and blue devils beside Him as the Hell guards who are his assistants.

They bring the deceased into Enma’s court for judgement and after judgement they tie the deceased with a rope and drag the screaming convicted prisoners into Hell professionally. Enma-san judges the deceased equally and strictly with the use of a crystal mirror and His recorded notes which greatly detail their behaviour since birth. He judges their behaviour piece by piece according to the notes. If the deceased tells a lie or gives excuses, then the crystal mirror beside Enma-san shows the truth exactly as they did throughout their life, like a video. Then as a punishment, as soon as the devils get the sinner’s mouth open they pull their lying tongue out with big tongs peremptorily. Therefore, Enma-san is very much a symbol of scariness for children as well as adults.

There are eight major categories of Hell and the torture that Enma-san chooses suitable for the sinner, determines which Hell they will go to. Each sinner’s sentence,

even if they committed the same infraction, is based on how bad or cruel they were to others.

1 Tokatsu Hell (Hell of Regeneration)

The first of the eight major hells is called “Tokatsu Hell” and is located 1,000 yojanas (one yojanas: 7miles) beneath this world. The sinners who fall into it hate one another and fight like dogs against monkeys whenever they happen to meet. With iron fingernails, they scuffle with one another causing bleeding and injuries to the flesh, until nothing but skeletons remain. Or, they are beaten up by the Hell Guards with iron bars until their whole body from head to toe is crushed into particles of sand, or cut up by a sharp sword into small pieces. Upon dying from such unbearable sufferings as these, they will be regenerated to undergo these cruel torments again. As for the karmic cause of falling into this Hell, anyone who abused a wife, child, husband and/or animal or kills a living being falls into it. If he killed even a tiny creature such as a mole, ant, mosquito or horsefly; he will fall into this Hell without fail unless he repents. Once he repents after committing this misdeed, if he commits the same misdeed again, he will never be pardoned even if he repents again.

2 Kokujo Hell (Hell of Black Ropes)

The second of the eight major Hells, “Kokujo Hell”, is located beneath the Tokatsu Hell. In this Hell, the Hell Guards seize the deceased, push them down on the ground of hot iron, make a line on the sinner’s body with a hot iron rope, and cut and scrape the body with hot iron hatches or saw off their limbs along the line. Moreover, there are huge iron mountains on both sides of the Hell. They erect iron flags on the top of each mountain, stretch an iron rope between the two flags and force the sinner to walk on the rope carrying masses of iron. Falling off the rope, the sinner’s body is broken into pieces. Otherwise they are boiled in iron pots. The suffering of these tortures is ten times more severe than the Tokatsu Hell. Those who committed the misdeed of killing as well as stealing, adultery and suicide fall into this Hell.

3 Shugo Hell (Hell of Crushing)

The third of the eight major Hells is “Shugo Hell”, which is located beneath the Kokujo. Here many pairs of Iron Mountains face each other. Hell Guards with cow heads and horse heads, and armed with sticks chase the sinner between the mountains. Then the pair of Iron Mountains draws closer, crushing the sinner and flooding the earth with blood. The karmic cause of falling into this Hell, are those who committed the misdeed of adultery, namely having sexual intercourse with the wife (or husband) of another person. There is a sword forest: one beautiful naked woman (or man) is on top of the sword trees, as soon as the sinners see the woman, they rush to climb up to the top but the leaves are like fine knives, their skin and flesh are cut and torn. Although they reach the top bleeding, the woman is now standing underneath the trees and seduces them saying, “Why won’t you come down for me?” They cannot stop the routine and cannot awaken to the fact that their sexual desire only creates more torture. They continue to be tormented by the up-down routine until nothing but their skeleton remains.

4 Kyokan Hell (Hell of Wailing)

The fourth Hell is called “Kyokan Hell”, located beneath the Shugo Hell. The Hell Guards shout in dreadful voices, shooting arrows at the sinners. They also strike the sinners’ heads with iron bars, forcing them to run on the hot iron ground or burn them in a hot iron roaster, turning them over many times. Or they forcibly pour boiling copper fluid into the mouths of the sinners so that the burned intestines drip down instantaneously. In this way the Hell Guards torment the sinners until their bodies melt and disappear but soon they revive again to continue endless tormenting. Those who commit the misdeed of drinking intoxicants such as alcohol beside the misdeed of killing, stealing, lying and adultery will fall into this Hell.

5 Dai-Kyokan Hell (Hell of Great Wailing)

The fifth Hell is “Dai-Kyokan Hell”, located beneath the Kyokan Hell. The torment in this Hell is similar to the Kyokan Hell but ten times more severe than the Hell above this Hell. Those who commit the misdeed of telling lies beside the grave as well as misdeeds of killing, stealing, adultery and drinking intoxicants will fall into this Hell. The sinners tongue is pierced through their jaw with red-hot iron spits; they cannot speak any words or even scream. The same process is done to their eyes, while the Hell Guards are humming “You caused torment by your lies”.

6 Shonetsu Hell (Hell of Burning Heat)

The sixth of the eight major Hells is “Shonetsu Hell”, which is located beneath the Dai-Kyokan Hell. Various types of sufferings exist in this Hell. Placed in the Jambudvipa (the world), a tiny flame of fire in this Hell will burn anything completely in no time, not to speak of the bodies of the sinners, which are as soft as cotton. The intensity of the fires in the five Hells mentioned above will seem like snow. The Hell Guards lay the sinners down on a big heated iron plate, toast and flip the sinners’ body to a frazzle, or put a skewer into the sinner’s anus and out through their head and roast the body on the skewer until it is well-done. Lastly they put the sinners into a cauldron and boil it until the body melts. The sinners who fall into this Hell are those of false view, they do not believe in the principle of causality and refer to someone who insists, for instance, that people who die of starvation will be reborn in heaven; along with committing the misdeeds of killing, stealing, adultery, drinking intoxicants and lying.

7 Dai-Shonetsu Hell (Hell of Great Burning Heat)

“Dai-Shonetsu Hell”, the seventh of the eight major Hells, is located beneath the Shonetsu Hell. However, the torment in this hell is ten times more severe than all the torments of the six Hells combined which are mentioned above. The sinners are forced to watch the horrible scene of this Hell before they are taken to this Hell. The Hell Guards grasp the sinners by the neck while they are crying, screaming and panicking; and drag them to the Hell. They arrive to a flaming valley, and the Hell Guards skin the sinners carefully with a fine sword and spread the skins and bodies together on the burning ground and pour boiling melted iron on the bodies. The Hell Guards continue to blame the sinners, push them into the valley, and then the flames

flare up along with the echo of the sinners' screams. Those who commit the karma of violating a nun who observes the precept of purity, in addition to the grave karma of killing, stealing, adultery; drinking intoxicants, lying, harbouring a false view and wounding faithful Buddhists will fall into this Hell.

8 Dai-Avici Hell (Great Avici Hell)

The last of the eight major Hells, "Dai-Avici Hell", is also called the Hell of Incessant Suffering because the deceased in this Hell suffers from interminable pain. The extreme torment of this Hell is beyond description except that it is 1,000 times as harsh as the sufferings of the seven major Hells or all the sufferings combined anywhere. The suffering is such that those sinners suffering in the Dai-Shonetsu Hell (7th Hell) appear as though they were heavenly beings playing in Heaven. The torment of this Hell is too horrible to describe in detail, you will be sick and vomiting. Speaking of the karmic causes, those who commit the five rebellious misdeeds fall into this Hell. Its misdeeds are the five deadly misdeeds of (1) killing one's father, (2) killing one's mother, (3) killing a clergy, (4) causing the body of the Buddha to bleed, and (5) causing disunity or destruction of the Sangha, Temple or the Buddhist Order. Slanderers of the True Dharma will also fall into this short "Hobo".

Nichiren Shonin said:

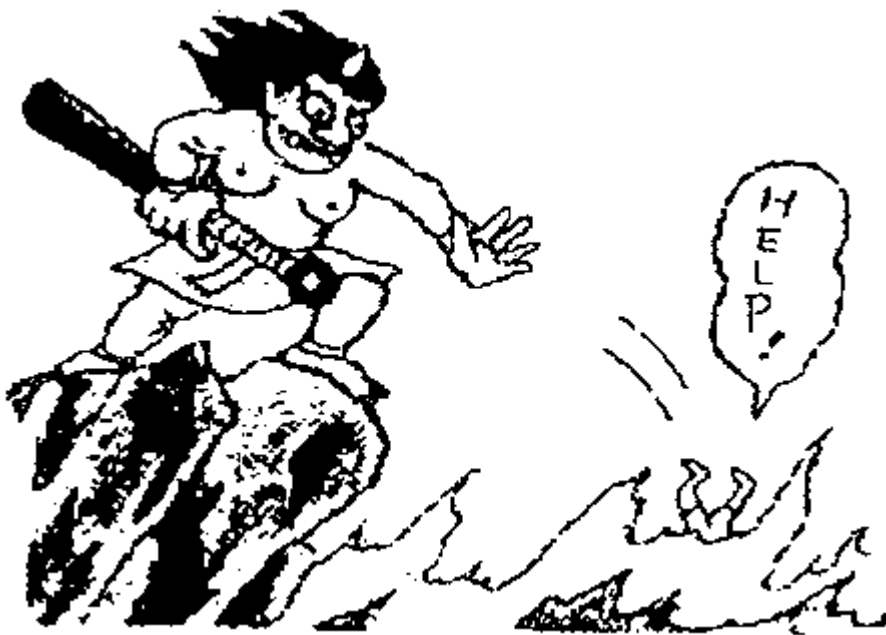
"No one in the world, including myself, thinks of himself as falling into one of the eight major Hells. While someone may speak of "going to Hell", he does not believe in his heart that he himself will go to Hell. Even Buddhists, whether Clergy or laity, male or female, who commits serious misdeeds, will be sent to Hell, though they are not afraid of the torment. Some put faith in such Bodhisattvas as "Jizo": Bodhisattva Earth Repository; relying upon such Buddhas as "Amitabha": the Buddha of Infinite Life or accumulating the merit of virtuous deeds. Those Buddhists each claim with confidence: "I have accumulated so much merit that I will never fall into Hell". Scholars of various schools of Buddhism firmly believe in their own intellectual understanding, and they are not afraid of committing the misdeeds that will send them to Hell. Those who believe in Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, however, do not really put faith in them. There is a world of difference between their faith in Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and their love for their own children and spouses or respect for their parents or Lord. Therefore, it is a false view for the people today to believe that they will never go to Hell if they implore Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for help or study the teaching of each Buddhist School. Thoughtful people should contemplate this."

"After death, we, human beings have to appear before the Judge of God "Enma-san" says a famous aged doctor. "When we die, we are taken to Enma's court. Before us, there is a scale of balance. "Place all things on one side that you have received from others when you were alive" says Enma-san in a deep voice. "Place all things on the other side that you have given to others when you were alive". If the received things are heavier than the given, Enma-san will judge, "You have taken advantage of people's kindness without giving to others. As such, you must go to Hell." Conversely, if you gave more than you received, Enma-san will advise that you may enter the better worlds or the peaceful Buddha world. Like this, the doctor mentioned about Enma's court and said, "I think my giving is not enough, I would like to work

harder so that medical treatment will be more helpful for others for as long as I may for the rest of my life.” This doctor saved many lives and achieved a medical reform to improve the medical system constantly, but he said, “It is still not enough”. Such words never came out from a selfish or arrogant mind.

Enma-san is a very scary God, but he is not unreasonably scary. He disciplines our selfish and arrogant mind to be humble and compassionate, in other words, Enma-san makes our Buddha nature awaken. Enma-san is not only a Judge but he is like a trainer for savage greedy human beings – “Be humble!” and “Be benevolent!”

We human beings are alive by helping each other or by being helped by others. It shows that the ways of life which is useful for us, as well as others, is a human natural working and absolutely happy life. In order to have such a life, we need to be humble and benevolent like the aged doctor, and naturally we will realize that the joyful feeling increases when we give more than we receive. It is a way of life for Enlightenment and as a way of Bodhisattva that the Lotus Sutra preaches to us. Please endeavour to be more considerate of others in your daily life in order that you may avoid being blamed by Enma-san.



“If you come after me, you may say, even in front of Enma Kind of Hell, “I am a Nichiren Shonin believe who is the first practitioner of the Lotus Sutra.” You may pass by safely. The Lotus Sutra will support you under any circumstances like a ship on the ocean, a light in the darkness of the death world, and a good vehicle on a deadly mountain, like the bridge to cross over to the Buddha world safely. After you have crossed over the bridge, please come and see me. I will surely wait for you at the Northeast passageway to the Buddha world. However, depending on your faith, if your faith was weak I will not be able to assure you cross over safely. Without problems you will come to see me, let us talk about many things.” This is Nichiren Shonin’s message to us.

Gassho

Thank you very much for your donations.