

**You Control your own Destiny
And
Change your Future**



**The Story of the King Ajatasattu
The son of King Bimbisara**

Compiled
for
the serene joy and emotion of the pious
A Gift of Dhamma

You Control your own Destiny And Change your Future

Introduction:

This story is dedicated to my younger dhamma friend, Ronnie who asked: wouldn't it be right to keep Ajatasattu, who killed his own father, to let him suffer in Avici Hell forever?

Yes, to punish Ajatasattu in Avici is the right thing to do according to the law of Kamma; but the length of time in Avici could be shortened by doing good deed when you realizes the sin committed and overwhelm the bad with the good. As a result of the first Buddhist Council, the Gotama Sasana will last for 5,000 years instead of a mere 500 years. The same was true with the Angulimala Thera who became an arahat in this very life.

Just as one can make a lot of garlands from a heap of flowers, so man, subject to birth and death as he is, should make himself a lot of good karma.

Dhammapada

This is the story of *King Ajatasattu* who kills his father *King Bimbisara* and went to Hell to suffer for this evil sin. However, after he learnt of his misdeed he seeks the three jewels (*Buddha-Dhamma-Sangha*) and sponsors the first *Buddhist council*. Though he had suffered in hell for a short while, because of his good deed that over powering his bad deeds, Buddha said, he the king Ajatasattu would become a solitary Buddha – *Peccaka-Buddha* in some future time.

The King Ajatasattu first committed evil sin, killing his father King Bimbisara, at the instigation of the *Devadatta*, the Buddha brother-in-law who wanted to overthrow the Buddha. Later after Buddha taught him the dhamma, the *Samaññaphala Sutta*, he realizes his misdeed and completely changed to live a virtuous life. After Buddha *Parinibbana*, he sponsors the first *Buddhist council*. For this good deed, Buddha said, in some future time, Ajatasattu will become a Peccaka Buddha, a solitary Buddha in some future time.¹

¹ Peccaka-Buddha - (By tradition, Peccaka-Buddha could appear only in the anta kappa where no Buddha will appear. No Peccaka Buddha can appear in an era where a teaching Buddha appears.)



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King Bimbisara Offers his Kingdom to the Buddha

You Control your own Destiny And Change your Future

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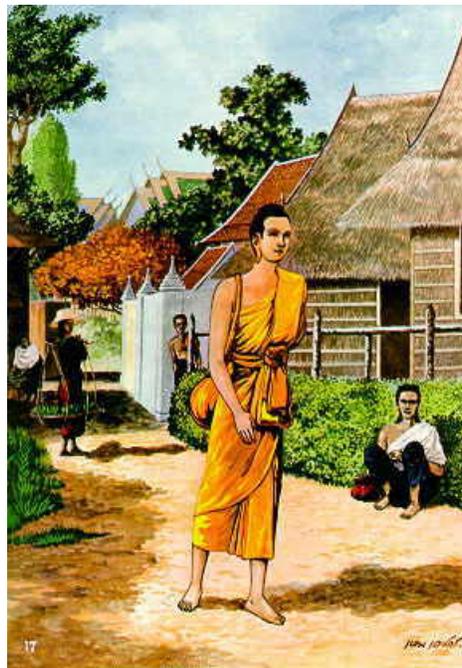
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1. The King Bimbisara of Magadha

Once, at the time of our Lord Buddha, the kingdom of *Magadha* was ruled by King *Bimbisara*. He has a crown prince, his son by the name of *Ajatasattu* whom he gave all his love and later crowns him as the King of Magadha. At the same time, our Lord Bodhisatta Siddhatta was just renounced the world to become an ascetic.

One day, our Bodhisatta, *Siddhatta*, having thus renounced the household life, become an ascetic for about 7 days, and he entered the city of *Rajagaha* and begged for food from house to house.

By his admirable demeanor as Bodhisatta, the Future Buddha, the whole city was thrown into a commotion as he was a distinct contrast to the usual type of ascetics of those days, who were old and shabby in appearance. The Future Buddha being then only 29 years of age and bearing all the signs of a Universal Monarch became an object of admiration and wonder.



Bodhisatta Siddhatta begging Alms in Rajagaha

Now the Great Being, our Bodhisatta, having collected some food for his sustenance went to the shade of *Pandava* rock and ate his meal. Thereupon, *Bimbisara*, the King, approached the Future Buddha, and being pleased with his princely demeanor and appearance offered him all his kingly glory.

"Great King", replied the Future Buddha,

"I do not seek for the gratification of my senses or my passions, but have retired from the world for the sake of the supreme and absolute enlightenment of a Buddha".

"Verily", said the King, when his repeated offers had all been refused, "you are sure to become a Buddha; but when that happens your first journey will be to my Kingdom

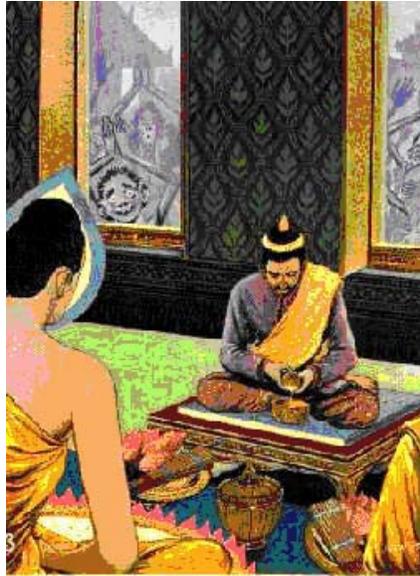
Bimbisara was the king of Magadha with the capital at Rajagaha. He was the greatest patron of Gotama Buddha. He became the king at the age of fifteen and reigned for fifty-two years until he abdicated the throne in favor of his son Ajatasattu (Sanskritised: Ajatashatru). His wife was a princess of Kosala, a sister of the king *Pasenadi*, who gave birth to Ajatasattu. He had other wives and co-wives, viz., Khema, Silava and Jayasena. He also had a son by the famous courtesan Ambapali, who was given the name Vimala Kondanna.

According to the *Pabbaja Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipata Atthakatha* it is stated that he first saw the ascetic Gotama through his palace window under the Pandava Pabbata and followed him and invited him to visit his court. But when Gotama turned down the invitation he wished him luck in his quest and re-extended the invitation to visit Rajagaha as soon as he achieved Enlightenment. It was in fulfillment of that promise that the Buddha had visited Rajagaha after converting the Tebhatika Jatila.

2. Bimbisara donates the Veluvana Park to the Buddha

When the Buddha and his monks visited Rajagaha as royal guests and finished the royal meals, Bimbisara then poured some water from a golden jar on the Buddha's

hands to express the solemnity of his pledge to donate Veluvana Park to him and his monks. Furthermore, Bimbisara continued to patronize the growth of Buddhism for another thirty-seven years.



Bimbisara's end was extremely tragic. Despite the warnings given by the soothsayers that his son Ajatasattu's birth was inauspicious for him, yet he reared him with great care and affection. When Ajatasattu came of age he plotted to kill his own father under the influence of Devadatta, who loathed the king's patronage to the Buddha, which had further undermined his recognition. When the plot was discovered; and the father read the intense urge of his son to become the monarch he abdicated the throne in his favor. But when instigated again by Devadatta the new monarch (Ajatasattu) got father Bimbisara arrested.

3. Bimbisara Imprisonment

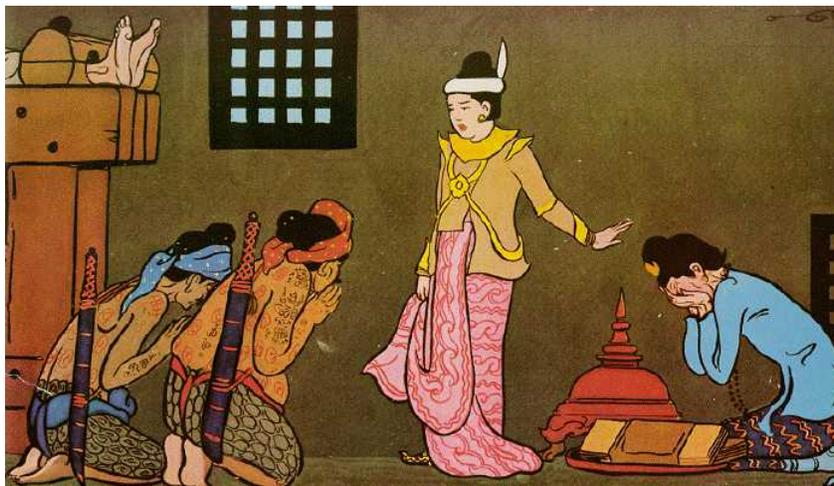
As Bimbisara was put to die by starvation, so was imprisoned in a heated prison house, where he was made to starve. No visitor was allowed to enter there except Khema, his mother. First, she carried food in a golden bowl concealed in her dress. When that was discovered she carried food concealed in her foot-gear. When that, too, was discovered she carried food concealed in her head-dress (*moli*). When all these were discovered then the queen mother visited the old man after bathing in

scented water and smearing honey in her body for the old king to lick and survive. When this, too, was detected her entry was finally banned.

Nonetheless, Bimbisara survived by meditating-while-walking. When the son learnt that his father was not to die easily he sent some barbers inside the prison. Bimbisara thought that his son had relented and had, at last, realized his guilt; so, he had sent the barbers to shave his beard and cut his hair to help him lead the life of a monk. But no! Those barbers were sent to cut open his feet and to fill the wounds with salt and vinegar and then to burn the wounds with coal.

Thus prevented from meditating-while-walking he met his tragic end

4. Bimbisara was tortured by his son



PRINCE AJATASATTU ORDERING THAT THE SOLES OF HIS FATHER'S FEET BE CUT OPEN WITH A KNIFE

Venerable Devadatta, Buddha brother-in-law, instigated Prince Ajatasattu to kill his father King Bimbisara as he thought that, if the Prince became King in succession to his father, he would be able to take the place of the Buddha. The Prince was of the view that whatever his teacher Devadatta said was good, and was on his way to carry out his plan to murder his father. His father questioned him and

the Prince admitted that he plotted to kill him because he wanted to become King. King Bimbisara gave up the throne in his favor.

After that, Venerable Devadatta told him that he would be able to rule without any risk of losing the throne only if his father was no longer alive. Prince Ajatasattu was impressed with this suggestion. But he did not wish to kill his father straight away. So he caused his father to be cast in prison. At first, the Prince's mother, the Queen was permitted to visit the King in person and he could take his meals. But, finally, the Queen was not permitted to visit the King any more, and the King kept himself fit by walking up and down inside the prison. Ajatasattu, however, ordered that the soles of the King's feet be cut open with a knife so that he could not walk.

5. King Ajatasattu.

Ajatasattu was the son of *King Bimbisara of Magadha*, one of the Buddha's earliest followers. Urged on by *Devadatta* -- the Buddha's cousin, who wished to use Ajatasattu's support in his bid to take over the Buddha's position as head of the Sangha -- *Ajatasattu* arranged for his father's death so that he could secure his own position on the throne. As a result of this evil deed,

- ✚ he was destined to be killed by his own son -- *Udayibhadda* --and
- ✚ to take immediate rebirth in one of the lowest regions of hell. (Avici)

In this discourse, *Samaññaphala Sutta*, Ajatasattu visits the Buddha in hopes that the latter will bring some peace to his mind. The question he puts to the Buddha shows the limited level of his own understanding, so the Buddha patiently describes the steps of the training, beginning at a very basic level and gradually moving up, as a way of raising the king's spiritual horizons. At the end of the talk, Ajatasattu takes refuge in the Triple Gem. Although his earlier deeds were so heavy that this expression of faith could have only limited consequences in the immediate present, the Commentary assures us that the king's story would ultimately have a happy ending.

After the Buddha's death, he sponsored the First Council, at which a congress of arahant disciples produced the first standardized account of the Buddha's teachings. As a result of the merit coming from this deed, Ajatasattu is destined -- after his release from hell -- to attain Awakening as a Private Buddha (Pacceka Buddha).

6. Conclusion

Ajatasutta has paid for his evil deed, for killing his father king Bimbisara, in two ways:

- ✚ He was killed by his own son, *Udayibhadda*
- ✚ He took rebirth in the Avici, immediately after his death

After listening to the Buddha discourse, *Samaññaphala Sutta*, he took refuge in the three jewels and lives a virtuous life and sponsors the first Buddhist Council by which merits, he would be enlightened as Peccaka – Buddha in some future time.

This story illustrates how one could change one's destiny and that the past kamma does not predetermines your future kamma. One could change the past kamma with present action.