

Good Fortune in This Life



EARLY in the New Year¹ I received your greetings from your messenger. Let us congratulate each other! And I have received your various gifts, including seventy slabs of rice cake, a bamboo container of sake, a horseload of taros, one paper bag of river laver, two bundles of radishes, and seven yams. These articles demonstrate your warmhearted sincerity.

The eighth volume of the Lotus Sutra says, “Their wishes will not be in vain, and in this present existence they will gain the reward of good fortune.”² It also states, “In this present existence he will have manifest reward for it.”³ The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai said, “The Son of Heaven uttered not a single word in vain,” and “The words of the Dharma King contain no falsehoods.”⁴ If one is a worthy ruler, one never lies, even if it would bring about one’s ruin. How much more is this true of the Thus Come One Shakyamuni, who, when he was King Universal Brightness in a previous existence, returned to the palace of King Spotted Feet [to be executed] because he observed the precept against lying! When he met King Kali in another past existence, he declared that those people who speak little truth or tell great lies will fall into hell. In addition, referring to the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha himself declares there, “The World-Honored

One [has long expounded his doctrines and] now must reveal the truth,”⁵ and furthermore, it was expounded at the assembly where Many Treasures Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions had gathered as if the sun, the moon, and countless stars were ranged side by side. If there are any falsehoods in the Lotus Sutra, what then can people believe in?

Those who offer even a flower or a stick of incense to such a sutra have offered alms to a hundred thousand million Buddhas in their previous existences. Moreover, in the Latter Day of the Law of Shakyamuni Thus Come One, when the world is in chaos, and the ruler, his ministers, and the common people all alike hate the votary of the Lotus Sutra; when this votary is like a fish living in a puddle during a drought, or like a deer surrounded by all sorts of people, those who visit this votary on their own will obtain far greater blessings than they would by making offerings with their mind, mouth, and body for the space of an entire kalpa to the living Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings. The golden words of the Thus Come One are clear.

The sun is brilliant, and the moon, clear. The words of the Lotus Sutra are brilliant and clear, clear and brilliant, like the reflection of a face in a bright

mirror, or the image of the moon on clear water. Yet could the Thus Come One's pronouncement "In this present existence they will gain the reward of good fortune," or his proclamation "In this present existence he will have manifest reward for it" possibly be empty only for Nanjo Shichiro Jiro? It is certain that, even if there were an age when the sun rises in the west, or a time were to come when the moon emerges from the ground, the Buddha's words would never prove false. Judging from this,

there cannot be the least doubt that your late father is now in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, and that you will receive great blessings in your present existence. How wonderful, how splendid!

Nichiren

The nineteenth day of the first month in the second year of Kenji (1276)

Reply to Nanjo



Background

This letter was written at Minobu when the Daishonin was fifty-five years old. Its recipient was Nanjo Shichiro Jiro Tokimitsu, commonly known as Nanjo Tokimitsu, a staunch follower of the Daishonin and the steward of Ueno Village in Fuji District of Suruga Province.

In the letter, citing the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin says that those who serve the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law, even for

a short time, will gain incalculably greater good fortune than those who serve Shakyamuni Buddha for an entire kalpa. Since all Buddhas have attested to the truth of the Lotus and it contains not a particle of falsehood, no doubt can exist that Tokimitsu's sincerity not only will bring him great blessings in his present existence, as the sutra promises, but also will benefit his deceased father.

Notes

1. According to the traditional Chinese and Japanese calendar, the New Year is also the beginning of spring.
2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 28.
3. Ibid. The full passage reads, "If there is anyone who offers alms to them [those who accept, uphold, read, and recite this

sutra] and praises them, then in this present existence he will have manifest reward for it."

4. A rephrasing of two passages in *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

5. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.