

## The Person and the Law



I HAVE just heard from your messenger that you are suffering from a serious illness. I hope you will recover soon and come to see me.

Also, I have received your gifts of a horseload of salt, a sack of soybeans, a bag of seaweed, and a bamboo container of sake. I have not seen you since you returned home from the province of Kozuke, and I have been wondering how you are. I can hardly find words to say how much I appreciate your sincerity in sending me a letter and the many gifts.

As you well know, a sutra says that the boy Virtue Victorious,<sup>1</sup> who offered a mud pie to the Buddha, was later reborn as King Ashoka, who ruled over most of the southern continent of Jambudvīpa. Since the Buddha is worthy of respect, the boy was able to receive this great reward even though the pie was only mud. Shakyamuni Buddha teaches, however, that one who makes offerings to the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the latter age for even a single day will gain benefit a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times greater than one would by offering countless treasures to the Buddha for one million kalpas. How wonderful then is your having wholeheartedly supported the votary of the Lotus Sutra over the years! According to the Buddha's golden words, in the next life you are certain to be reborn in the

pure land of Eagle Peak. What remarkable rewards you will gain!

This is a mountainous place, remote from all human habitation. Not a single village is found in any direction. Although I live in such a forsaken place, deep in this mortal flesh I preserve the ultimate secret Law inherited from Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, at Eagle Peak. My heart is where all Buddhas enter nirvana; my tongue, where they turn the wheel of the Law; my throat, where they are born into this world; and my mouth, where they attain enlightenment. Because this mountain is where this wondrous votary of the Lotus Sutra dwells, how can it be any less sacred than the pure land of Eagle Peak? This is what [*The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* means when] it says, "Since the Law is wonderful, the person is worthy of respect; since the person is worthy of respect, the land is sacred." The "Supernatural Powers" chapter reads, "Whether in a forest, beneath a tree, in monks' quarters . . . in such places have the Buddhas entered nirvana." Those who visit this place can instantly expiate the offenses they have accumulated since the infinite past and transform their evils deriving from the three types of action into the three virtues.<sup>2</sup>

A suffering traveler in central India once came to Heat-Free Lake to quench

the fires of anguish in his heart. He proclaimed that he could fulfill his desire, “as a clear cool pond can satisfy all those who are thirsty.”<sup>3</sup> Although Heat-Free Lake and this place are different, the principle is exactly the same. Thus, Eagle Peak of India is now here at Mount Minobu in Japan. It has been a long time since you were last here. You should come to see me as soon as you

possibly can. I am looking forward eagerly to seeing you.

How can I describe your sincerity? In truth, it is splendid!

Nichiren

The eleventh day of the ninth month in the fourth year of Koan (1281)

Reply to Nanjo



## Background

Nichiren Daishonin sent this letter from Mount Minobu to Nanjo Tokimitsu, the steward of Ueno Village in Suruga, in the ninth month, 1281. Nanjo Tokimitsu was then just twenty-two years old.

Following the Atsuhara Persecution, in which Nanjo Tokimitsu had played an extremely important role in supporting the believers, government officials had taxed his estate heavily so that

he had difficulty maintaining his family. Exactly what illness he was suffering from remains unclear; he recovered, however, and lived for some fifty years after this letter was written.

The title of this letter, *The Person and the Law*, is derived from a passage of *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra* that states that, since the Law is wonderful, the person who upholds it is worthy of respect.

## Notes

1. This story appears in *The Story of King Ashoka*.

2. The three types of action—that is, deeds, words, and thoughts—by which kar-

ma is created. The three virtues here mean the Dharma body, wisdom, and emancipation, which are attributes of a Buddha.

3. Lotus Sutra, chap. 23.