

Easy Delivery of a Fortune Child



I UNDERSTAND the circumstances of your pregnancy. In response to your request, I have prepared the protective agent,¹ choosing from among the lore that has been transmitted to me. You must be careful to have firm faith. For example, even the most excellent medicine will have little effect if poison is added to it. Even a sword will be of no use to a coward.

Above all, both you and your husband are upholders of the Lotus Sutra. You will surely bear a jewel of a child who is going to inherit the seed for the propagation of the Lotus Sutra. I wholeheartedly congratulate you. The child is the one who will inherit both your physical and spiritual aspects. How could you possibly suffer a prolonged labor? I expect that the child will be born quickly. If you take this medicine, there can be no doubt. Even the darkness becomes bright when a lantern is lit, and even muddy water becomes clear when the moon shines on it.

Can anything exceed the sun and moon in brightness? Can anything surpass the lotus flower in purity? The Lotus Sutra is the sun and moon and the lotus flower. Therefore it is called the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law. Nichiren, too, is like the sun and moon and the lotus flower.

If the water of your faith is clear, the

moon of blessings will surely cast its reflection on it and protect you. You are assured of an easy delivery. A passage from the Lotus Sutra says, "A wonderful Law such as this . . .,"² and another says, "She will be delivered safely of a healthy child."³ I have carefully explained in detail to Ben-ko⁴ about the orally transmitted instructions. Therefore, Ben-ko is "an envoy of the Thus Come One."⁵ You must be earnest in your faith.

The Sun Goddess bestowed a jewel upon Susano'o no Mikoto,⁶ who then fathered a jewel of a boy child. For that reason, the Sun Goddess designated the child as her own and then named him Masaya Akatsu.⁷ When I have provided the seed for an easy delivery, how could the child be any less than my own? The sutra speaks of "a precious jewel worth as much as the major world system"⁸ and also says, "This cluster of unsurpassed jewels has come to us unsought."⁹ The Thus Come One Shakyamuni states, "The living beings in it [the threefold world] are all my children."¹⁰ How could Nichiren possibly differ from the meaning of these passages? How fortunate! How auspicious! I will write again on another occasion.

Respectfully,
Nichiren

The seventh day of the fifth month
in the eighth year of Bun'ei (1271)

Reply to the wife of Shijo Kingo



Background

This letter was written in Matsubagayatsu, Kamakura, in the fifth month of 1271 to Nichigen-nyo, the wife of Shijo Kingo. It is the earliest of the many extant writings that Nichiren Daishonin sent to the Shijo family.

Nichigen-nyo had grown uneasy as the birth of her first child drew near. She asked the Daishonin for a protective agent so that she could be certain of an easy delivery. He sent it to her immediately via Nissho, one of his earliest converts, along with this letter of

encouragement. The Daishonin urges Nichigen-nyo to take the agent he has specially prepared for her with firm faith in the Lotus Sutra.

On the eighth day of the fifth month, the day after receiving the letter, Nichigen-nyo gave birth to a baby girl. Shijo Kingo relayed the news of the safe delivery to the Daishonin, who immediately sent a congratulatory letter (p. 188) in which, in response to Nichigen-nyo's request, he named the baby Tsukimaro, or Full Moon.

Notes

1. The use of a protective agent was common practice among the Buddhist schools of feudal Japan. Generally the agent took the form of the figure or words of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or deities written on paper or wood. One then either placed this item somewhere in one's home, attached it to one's person, or, if it was made of paper, ingested it. The protective agent also sometimes took the form of powdered herbs that were to be dissolved in water and drunk. What formula the Daishonin used for his protective agent is unknown.

2. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.

3. Ibid., chap. 19.

4. Nissho (1221-1323), one of the Dai-

shonin's six senior disciples.

5. The Daishonin borrows the wording of a passage in chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra.

6. An unruly storm god in Japanese mythology who was the younger brother of the Sun Goddess.

7. "Masaya Akatsu" may be rendered as "Truly I Have Conquered." He was a deity said to have been born from the mist of Susano'o's breath after he chewed up a necklace he had received from the Sun Goddess. This story is found in *The Records of Ancient Matters* and other sources.

8. Lotus Sutra, chap. 12.

9. Ibid., chap. 4.

10. Ibid., chap. 3.