

Reply to the Wife of Takahashi



I HAVE received one basket of melons, one basket of cowpeas, green soybeans, taros, and pickled melons. A scripture called the Buddha's Successors Sutra predicts that a boy who presented the Buddha with a mud pie will be reborn one hundred years after the Buddha's passing and become the king of one quarter of Jambudvīpa. This was the great king Ashoka.

The "Teacher of the Law" chapter in the Lotus Sutra mentions the span of an entire kalpa, and compares the benefits of making various offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha for that long to the benefits of one who makes offerings to the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra in the latter age for even a short while. It says that that person's "good fortune will be even greater" and teaches that the benefits of making offerings to the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra are superior. The Great Teacher Miao-lo commented on this point, saying, "Those who give alms to them will enjoy good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles."¹ Thus because your good fortune surpasses that of making offerings to the Buddha, you will surely become a Buddha. Moreover, even in your circumstances as a woman, you have become a lay nun. It is thus all the more certain.

No doubt, however, some people are urging both of you to become Nembutsu believers. The present-day Nembutsu believers and observers of the precepts are the very ones who are bringing ruin on the country and inviting the calamity of invasion from neighboring lands. The people of Japan, without exception, have become enemies of Nichiren. How will they fare if they incur blame from the king Brahmā, the lord Shakra, the gods of the sun and moon, and the four heavenly kings, and end up in a situation as tragic as it was that time in Iki and Tsushima?²

But what grieves me most is the illness of the lay priest. I wish you would urge him to live a little longer and wait to see what happens to this world that slanders the Lotus Sutra. The population of Japan, for the most part, will be taken alive. Perhaps they will regret that they have had me exiled twice, and have had me struck on the head with the scroll of the fifth volume of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren

The twenty-sixth day of the seventh month

Written in reply

Background

This letter was written on the twenty-sixth day of the seventh month in 1275 to thank the wife of the lay priest Takahashi for the vegetables she had sent to Minobu as an offering to Nichiren Daishonin. The Daishonin describes how a young boy's gift of a mud pie to Shakyamuni Buddha led to his becoming in a later lifetime the great king Ashoka. He then draws upon passages from the Lotus Sutra and Miao-lo's commentary on the sutra, declaring that one who makes offerings to the practitioner of the Lotus in the

Latter Day of the Law surpasses in good fortune one who makes offerings to the Buddha. Thus, he says, Takahashi's wife will never fail to become a Buddha herself. That she became a lay nun, the Daishonin says, reveals her resolve to devote herself to Buddhism.

Then the Daishonin expresses his great concern for her husband, whose illness has become serious, and asks the lay nun to urge him to live a little longer and see what happens to this country of Japan that slanders the Lotus Sutra and persecutes its practitioner.

Notes

1. *The Annotations on "The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra."* The ten honorable titles are epithets expressing the Buddha's virtue, wisdom, and compassion.

2. Reference is to the invasion of Iki and Tsushima, islands off Kyushu, by Mongol troops.