

Reply to the Wife of Ōta



I HAVE received the one *koku* of rice and ten *gō* of other grains.

Because in a time of severe drought one provides water to those who are thirsty, one will be born as a great dragon king and cause rain to fall for the sake of human and heavenly beings. And a person who provides food in a time of famine will be born as the ruler of a kingdom, and his kingdom will prosper.

Once in the past there was a great king named Golden Color who ruled a kingdom called *Vārānasī*.¹ For twelve years his land suffered from drought and many of the inhabitants starved to death. The houses were filled with dead bodies and the roads blocked with corpses. At that time the king, moved to pity for all living beings, opened his storehouses and distributed their contents, until only one day's supply of goods was left in them. Then he called all the monks together and gave them

what was left as an offering. The king, his consort, and the monks and common people then all prepared to die of starvation, whereupon food and drink began to pour down from heaven like rain. In no time at all the kingdom became rich and prosperous. All this is recorded in the King Golden Color Sutra.

And your own case will be similar. Because of the offerings you have made, you will enjoy good fortune in your present life, and in your next existence will proceed to the pure land of Eagle Peak.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-fourth day of the ninth month

Reply to the wife of the lay priest
Ōta



Background

The wife of the lay priest Ōta Jōmyō, a disciple of Nichiren Daishonin who lived in Nakayama of Shimōsa Province, had sent the Daishonin one *koku* (equivalent to about 180 liters) of rice,

and ten *gō* (1.8 liters) of other grains. This reply, written at Minobu on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month in 1278, acknowledges receipt of that offering and describes the benefits ac-

cruing from such a sincere donation. The Daishonin relates the story of King Golden Color, an account of a past existence of Shakyamuni Buddha, adapted from the King Golden Color Sutra. He illustrates the causality of making an offering with the example

of the king's self-sacrificing generosity in the face of famine, which resulted in the prosperity of his kingdom. The Daishonin assures Ōta's wife that the same principle applies to her and she will enjoy great fortune in this life and become a Buddha in the future.

Note

1. Golden Color was the name of Shakyamuni Buddha during his life as a king in a previous existence, as described in the

King Golden Color Sutra. Vārānasī was the capital of the Kāshī kingdom, one of the sixteen great states in ancient India.