

Daimoku as the Seed of Buddhahood



CONCERNING this resolve of yours, I can't help but be reminded of the late Ueno.

I have received the horseload of taros as well as the chestnuts, parched rice, and ginger.

In the deep recesses of the mountains here no one cultivates taros. Chestnuts never ripen and ginger never sprouts. And of course parched rice is not to be seen.

Even if, for example, chestnuts were to ripen, monkeys would blight the branches and treetops. And no one cultivates taros. But even if people were to cultivate them, they detest me so they would never share them. Why was it that I had to come to such a high mountain?

When one looks at the mountain, one sees that it drops down gradually from its heights to its foothills. When one looks at the sea, one finds that it gradually goes from shallow to deep. When one looks at the world, one finds that it has gradually declined year after year, from thirty years ago to twenty, to five, four, three, two, one year ago. The same is true of people's minds.

Now when an age comes to its end, only twisted trees remain on the mountainside, only low grasses grow in the fields. In the world wise people are few, while foolish ones abound.

They are like cows and horses, which never know their fathers, or like hares and sheep, unable to pick out their mothers.

It has been more than 2,220 years since the Buddha passed into extinction. Now we have come to this latter age, when men of wisdom gradually disappear from view, in the same way that a mountain slopes down, or like the shallow grasses. Though there are many who do things such as chant the Nembutsu or uphold the precepts, few rely on the Lotus Sutra. Though there are multitudes of stars, they fail to illuminate the great sea. Though there are myriads of grasses, they never become pillars in the imperial palace. In the same manner, even if one chants the Nembutsu many times, it can never be the path to attaining Buddhahood. And even if one upholds the precepts, it can never be the seed for rebirth in a pure land. Only the seven characters of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo are the seed for attaining Buddhahood.

When I spoke out in this way, people felt hatred and rejected it, but the late Ueno believed and thus attained Buddhahood. You are all his kin and therefore I am certain you will be able to carry out this resolve. Is this not what is meant by the sayings that a mite clinging to a fleet horse flies a thousand miles, and that the ivy wind-

ing around the pine tree soars a thousand feet? Each of you possesses the same heart as the late Ueno.

A man who offered a mud pie to the Buddha was reborn as a king.¹ Because the Lotus Sutra is a teaching superior to the Buddha, having made offerings to it, how could you possibly fail to both enjoy benefit in this lifetime and attain Buddhahood in the next?

Moreover, since you are poor, you have no servants. There are obstacles at mountains and rivers. Even if you have a firm resolve, it may be difficult to act

upon. But judging from the resolve you are displaying now, I see that yours is hardly ordinary. There can be no doubt that the ten demon daughters of the Lotus Sutra will protect you. How reassuring it is to think so! It is impossible to say all that I wish.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The first day of the eleventh month
in the first year of Kōan [1278]

Reply to Kurō Tarō



Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter on the first day of the eleventh month in 1278 at Minobu to Kurō Tarō, a believer who is thought to have been a relative of Nanjō Tokimitsu. After thanking Tarō for his offerings to the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin laments that now that 2,220 and more years have passed since the Buddha's extinction, the latter age has begun and men of wisdom have gradually diminished in numbers. Foolish people predominate and reject the Daishonin's message that Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the seed of

Buddhahood. But the late Ueno, or Nanjō Hyōe Shichirō, the father of Nanjō Tokimitsu, believed it and thus attained Buddhahood. The Daishonin praises his kin, including Tarō, and says that they possess the same heart as Hyōe Shichirō. He tells Tarō that his resolve to bring offerings despite his limited means and the rigors of the journey to Minobu ensures that he too will enjoy benefit, gain the protection of the ten demon daughters, and attain Buddhahood.

Note

1. This refers to the boy Virtue Victorious, who offered a mud pie to Shakyamuni Buddha. According to *The Story of King*

Ashoka, as a result of this offering, Virtue Victorious was later reborn as King Ashoka.