

## The Buddha Resides in a Pure Heart



I HAVE received from you one *to* of polished rice, a horseload of taros, a basket of pears, myōga,<sup>1</sup> ginger, green soybeans, wasabi, and various other items.

The moon's reflection will not dwell in muddy water; no birds are to be found in the limbs of a dead tree. The Buddha will not inhabit the body of a heartless woman. But a woman who upholds the Lotus Sutra is like pure water; the moon of Shakyamuni Buddha will reside there.

It is like the situation when a woman first becomes pregnant. She is not immediately aware of what has happened, but as the months gradually go by, as the days pass, she begins to wonder, and eventually she is certain of the fact.

A pure-hearted woman can tell whether her baby will be a boy or a girl. And the teachings of the Lotus Sutra are like this. When in one's heart one takes faith in Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the heart becomes a dwelling and Shakyamuni Buddha takes up residence there. At first one is not aware of this,

but gradually, as the months go by, the Buddha in the heart begins to appear as in a dream, and one's heart becomes bit by bit ever more joyful. Numerous are the teachings of Buddhism in this regard, but I will not go into them here.

At first one may seem to have faith in the Lotus Sutra, but it is hard to maintain that faith to the last. Water, for example, may be stirred by the wind, or blossoms may lose their hue with the fading of the morning dew. How, then, have you been able to persist in your faith up until today? It must be thanks entirely to the blessings you have acquired in previous existences, and to the care bestowed on you by Shakyamuni Buddha. How heartening is that thought, how heartening indeed!

I entrusted the priest Kai<sup>2</sup> with further explanation of these matters.

Nichiren

The first day of the ninth month

Reply to the wife of Matsuno



## Background

This letter, written at Minobu in 1280, is Nichiren Daishonin's message of appreciation to the wife of Matsuno Rokurō Saemon-no-jō for the offerings of food and other items she had sent him. The Daishonin compares the lives of those who remain attached to the provisional teachings to "muddy water." Their lives, "muddied" by illusion and suffering, cannot manifest Buddhahood. On the other hand, he writes, "A woman who upholds the Lotus Sutra is like pure water; the moon of Shakyamuni Buddha will reside there." The Daishonin likens the

process by which one's Buddhahood develops to that of a pregnant woman who, though at first unaware of her condition, gradually becomes more certain of her pregnancy. Similarly, though not initially aware of one's own Buddhahood, as one persists steadfastly with faith and practice, the wisdom of the Buddha becomes manifest unmistakably in one's heart and mind. Because faith in the Lotus Sutra is hard to sustain, however, perseverance is essential, and the Daishonin praises her steadfastness.

## Notes

1. A perennial plant belonging to the ginger family, whose buds and flower stems are both fragrant and edible.

2. Nichiji (b. 1250), later one of the six senior priests designated by Nichiren Dai-

shonin. He was a younger brother of Matsuno Rokurō Saemon-no-jō. As a boy, he entered Shijūku-in temple and studied under Nikkō, taking the name Kai-kō.