

Not a One Will Fail to Attain Buddhahood



WHEN Shakyamuni Buddha was still an ordinary mortal observing the precept against telling a lie, he had his eye plucked out, his skin stripped off, his flesh torn, his blood sucked, his bones picked dry, his children slaughtered, his wife taken from him. But during those countless kalpas, not once did he tell a lie. And when, as a result of the merit he had gained, he became a Buddha, he declared that “not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood.”¹ That is, he taught that of those

who so much as one time pronounce the words Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, not one will fail to become a Buddha.

The pronouncement was made by Shakyamuni Buddha alone, but there can surely be no doubt about it—how could he have lied in the presence of the Buddhas of the ten directions? Moreover, Shakyamuni Buddha and the Buddhas of the ten directions all at the same time extended their tongues up to the Brahma heaven.²



Background

The date and recipient of this fragment of a letter by Nichiren Daishonin are unknown. It focuses on the trustworthiness of Shakyamuni Buddha, specifically in his proclaiming in the “Expedient Means” (2nd) chapter, “If

there are those who hear the Law, then not a one will fail to attain Buddhahood.” The Daishonin equates those who “hear the Law” with those who “so much as one time pronounce the words Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.”

Notes

1. Lotus Sutra, chap. 2.
2. Described in chapter twenty-one of the Lotus Sutra.