

Reply to Myoichi ama (Myoichi ama gozen-goshosoku)

Those who maintain faith in the Lotus Sutra are as if in winter, but winter always turns to spring. Never, since ancient times, has anyone heard of or seen winter turn back to autumn. Nor have I heard of a believer in the Lotus Sutra turning back into a common mortal. The sutra states, “If there are people who listen to the [true] Law, then not one will fail to attain Buddhahood.”

(Gosho, p. 832)

Explanation

Those people who believe in the Lotus Sutra are as if they are in winter. However, winter always turns to spring. Never since olden times have I heard of or seen winter turning into autumn. In the same way, I have never heard of a believer in the Lotus Sutra not attaining enlightenment and turning back into a common mortal. A passage from the Expedient Means (*Hoben*) chapter of the Lotus Sutra states: “If there are people who listen the [true] Law, then not one will fail to attain Buddhahood.”

Explanation of the Major Terms

- **Lotus Sutra (*Hokekyo*):** In the Latter Day of the Law, the Lotus Sutra in this context refers to Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, the Buddhism of sowing of the Daishonin.
- **“If there are people who listen to the [true] Law, then not one will fail to attain Buddhahood.”** (*“Nyaku u monpo sha muichi fu jobutsu”*): This is a passage from the Expedient Means (*Hoben*; second) chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

Background and Summary

This Gosho was written in Minobu in May of the first year of Kenji (1275), when Nichiren Daishonin was 54 years of age. It was a letter addressed to Myoichi ama gozen, who lived in Kamakura. Four years earlier, in the eighth year of Bunnei (1271), the Daishonin encountered tremendous persecutions that almost claimed his life—the Tatsunokuchi Persecution and the Sado Exile. In the aftermath, his disciples and followers felt the consequences of what had occurred, and many of them renounced their faith because they could not withstand the pressure. However, Myoichi ama overcame those difficult conditions and continued to carry through her pure faith.

In this Gosho, the Daishonin is concerned about Myoichi ama, who had lost her son and was taking care of his sickly son and daughter. He tells her that her deceased son has undoubtedly attained enlightenment through the benefits of his practice and is watching over the family. The Daishonin concludes the letter by thanking Myoichi ama for her offering of a robe and for sending a servant to help him.

Reference from Gosho passages and High Priest guidance

- Expedient Means (*Hoben*; second) chapter of the Lotus Sutra:
“If there are people who listen to the [true] Law, then not one will fail to attain Buddhahood.”
- Reply to Myoichi ama
Since the words of the Buddha are never false, the Lotus Sutra will certainly spread. (*Gosho*, p. 832)
- *Repaying Debts of Gratitude* (Ho'on-sho)
Since Nichiren's compassion is vast, Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo will prevail for ten thousand years and beyond into the future. (*Gosho*, p. 1036)
- Second High Priest Nikko Shonin ;*The Twenty-Six Admonitions of Nikko* (Nikko yuikai okimon):
Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability, without begrudging your life. (*Gosho*, p. 1884)
- Guidance From High Priest Nichinyo Shonin
All things come about from conviction. Therefore, we first and foremost must have absolute faith in the Gohonzon. We must continue faith and practice based on these golden words: “Not one will fail to attain Buddhahood” (“*muichi fu jobutsu*”). There is no one who will not attain enlightenment. We must uphold the great conviction that everyone will achieve enlightenment, without fail, if we continue this faith and practice. I am convinced that this is where we can begin to see our own great development, our enlightenment in this lifetime (*issho jobutsu*), and our journey to kosen-rufu.
(*Selected Gosho Passages on Faith and Practice*[Shingyo yomon], Vol. 3, p. 31)
- Letter From Sado “One's karma cannot be measured.” (*Gosho*, p. 580)