

Guidance from High Priest Nichinyo Shonin
March Kosen-rufu Shodai Ceremony
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Reception Hall, Taisekiji

[Extracted]

We, the people of the Latter Day of the Law, can manifest the [attainment of] Buddhahood as we are, despite our being tormented by the three poisons of greed, anger, and stupidity. In this way, we can build true happiness spanning all three existences of life through absolute faith in [and practice to] the Dai-Gohonzon.

This is why the Daishonin writes, in “Reply to Nambu Rokuro Saburo”:

King Ajatashatru was an evil man who murdered his father and imprisoned his mother. However, when he heard the teaching of the Lotus Sutra at the assembly where the Buddha expounded the Nirvana Sutra, his incurable boils were healed. Moreover, his life was prolonged by forty years. Furthermore, even though he originally lacked the roots of faith, he ultimately reached the first stage of stability, and Shakyamuni affirmed that he would achieve Buddhahood. Devadatta was an *icchantika*, the worst in the entire world. According to all of the earlier sutras preached during Shakyamuni’s lifetime, he was considered hopeless. But when the Buddha expounded the Lotus Sutra, he predicted that Devadatta ultimately would attain Buddhahood as the Heavenly King Tathagata. From these examples, it can be concluded that the attainment of enlightenment for evil people in the Latter Day of the Law does not depend on whether their offenses are light or heavy, but solely on whether or not they have faith in this sutra.... (Gosho, p. 684)

King Ajatashatru, spurred on by Devadatta, assassinated King Bimbisara—his father—so he could usurp his throne. But at the urging of the great physician Jivaka, this callously brutal man met Shakyamuni Buddha and became his disciple. Upon hearing the Lotus Sutra, not only was Ajatashatru cured of painful sores covering his body, but he also had his life extended by forty years. Furthermore, he received affirmation that he would achieve the first stage of stability, even though he originally lacked the root of faith. This indicates that even someone who lacks the capacity for faith can develop the mindset to believe and reach the “first stage of stability”—the point where they can persist in advancing towards enlightenment—through the power of Myoho-Renge-Kyo.

For his part, Devadatta envied Shakyamuni and was hostile to anything and everything Shakyamuni did or said. He committed the three cardinal sins of injuring the

Buddha by dropping a boulder on him causing his foot to bleed; killing an arhat, the nun Utpalavarna; and instigating disunity among the Buddhist Order. He was the world's foremost *icchantika* (person of incorrigible disbelief), neither believing in the correct Law, pursuing the path to enlightenment, nor possessing the capacity for Buddhahood. But though he fell into hell, when Shakyamuni preached in the Devadatta (*Daibadatta*; twelfth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra about causes and relationships from previous existences [and the effects in the present], he revealed that Devadatta had been his good influence (*zenchishiki*) in past lives, and prophesized his future enlightenment as Heavenly King Thus-Come-One.

Through the examples of King Ajatashatru and Devadatta, the Daishonin is telling us that whether people in the Latter Day of the Law can or cannot achieve enlightenment is not determined by the gravity of their transgressions, but rather by whether they believe—whether they have faith. This is expressed when the sutra states: “[Even you, Shariputra...were able to] gain entrance through faith alone.” Faith is the essential element for [completing the path to and] achieving Buddhahood....

A section of the Gosho “The Doctrine of *Ichinen Sanzen*” reads:

This teaching does not deny Buddhahood to evil people, women, people of the two vehicles, and *icchantika*. Thus, [the Expedient Means (*Hoben*; second) chapter of the Lotus Sutra] states that all people attain Buddhahood by carrying out the Buddha way. [The Treasure Tower (*Ken hoto*; eleventh) chapter of the sutra] also expounds on the Buddha's profound wisdom, which bestows benefits equally on all living beings....
(*Gosho*, p. 110)

The essence of this is that exerting yourself in faith and practice with absolute confidence in the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of the Essential Teaching is the noblest and best path for achieving enlightenment in this life. Faith [and practice] based on our acceptance of and belief in the Dai-Gohonzon and the Dai-Gohonzon's immeasurable power—abundant faith and practice in which we totally dedicate ourselves and leave everything up to the Dai-Gohonzon—enables us to build true happiness spanning the three existences [of life].

In this context, I pray from the depths of my being that you will arm yourselves with absolute confidence in the Dai-Gohonzon and apply all your energy so, having achieved your shakubuku pledges, you'll be able to end the year knowing that you left no stone unturned.