

The Significance of Offering Gokuyō

During his lifetime, Nichiren Daishonin received Gokuyō offerings from many believers. In appreciation for their precious, sincere contribution, he often wrote words of appreciation and praise in his Gosho. From this, we can see that making Gokuyō offerings is an essential part of our Buddhist practice.

In *The Bodies and Minds of Living Beings* (Shujō shinshin-gosho), the Daishonin states:

Even if a person is unintelligent in mind and presents only paltry offerings, if he extends them to an individual who embraces the truth, he will receive tremendous benefits. How much more so would be the benefit of those who make sincere offerings to the true Law!

(*Gosho*, p. 1217)

Therefore, even if ignorant, simple-minded people make small offerings, if they present them to those who uphold the true teaching, they will receive great benefits. Furthermore, the Daishonin explains that the benefits are inconceivably huge for those who make offerings to the true Law with deep sincerity.

Moreover, the Daishonin expounds the following in the *Letter to Ni'ike* (Ni'ike-gosho):

Reflect upon and consider the fact that you will never travel down the evil paths if you present an offering with wondrous aspiration even once to a priest who knows the Lotus Sutra. Even greater are the benefits of extending offerings ten or twenty times or over a period of five or ten years or an entire lifetime. Even the wisdom of the Buddha cannot possibly gauge them. The Buddha explained that the benefits of making a single offering to the votary of this sutra are a hundred, thousand, ten-thousand, a hundred-million and infinite times greater than those of directly offering Shakyamuni Buddha all the limitless treasures for eight-billion kalpas.

(*Gosho*, p. 1456)

He teaches that the benefits of offering Gokuyō enable us to avoid the three evil paths and to gain limitless benefits. Here, he explains the vastness and greatness of the benefits that we can receive from correctly making Gokuyō offerings.

Nanjō Tokimitsu was one believer who thoroughly took upon himself the responsibility of protecting and supporting Nichiren Daishonin during his lifetime. Ever since he was young, Tokimitsu served Nichiren Daishonin. He completely upheld the spirit of true Gokuyō offerings, regardless of what circumstances he encountered.

Nichiren Daishonin writes the following in *Reply to Ueno* (Ueno dono-gohenji):

Despite your meager resources, you have been heavily burdened with many civic responsibilities, leaving you unable to keep a horse or adequately clothe your wife and children. In spite of all this, out of your concern for the Votary of the Lotus Sutra, and apprehension that he might be tormented by snow deep in the mountains and suffering from lack of food, you have made an offering of one *kan* of coins. This is like the poor woman and her husband giving their only robe to a mendicant monk or like Rida offering millet from his own bowl to a Pratyekabuddha. How splendid! How admirable!

(*Gosho*, p. 1529;
The Gosho of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, pp. 77 – 79)

Even when Tokimitsu, himself, was suffering from great poverty, he was concerned about Nichiren Daishonin, who lived in Mount Minobu where the snow was deep and food was scarce. He made a Gokuyō offering of one *kan* of coins, and the Daishonin expresses his deep appreciation to him.

He concludes this passage by stating how Tokimitsu's thoughtfulness is truly precious. He compares his kind offering to that of the poor man and woman who presented a mendicant monk with the only robe in their possession, which they had been sharing with each other, and to that of Rida, who offered the millet in his bowl to a Pratyekabuddha.

Furthermore, the Daishonin teaches us the following in the *Letter to Matsuno* (Matsuno dono-goshōsoku):

Long ago, a child named Tokushō Dōji made an offering of a mud pie to Shakyamuni Buddha. As a result, he was reborn as King Ashoka and ruled throughout Jambudvīpa. Ultimately he was able to become a Buddha.

(*Gosho* p. 952)

Long ago in India, when Shakyamuni Buddha visited Rajagrha, Tokushō Dōji offered him mud pies which he had made for the Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha said the following about the benefits of Tokushō Dōji's offering: "In 100 years, this child shall be reborn as a great king." True to his word, the child was later reborn as the Great King Ashoka. He unified India, and his rule was based on Buddhism.

Thus, a Gokuyō offering represents the tangible manifestation of our sincere faith to the three treasures of the Buddha, the Law, and the priesthood. It is a repayment of our debt of gratitude to the three treasures. A truly sincere Gokuyō offering creates great benefits and good karmic causes. The Buddhist scriptures describe two types of offerings—material offerings (*zai kuyō*) and the offering of the Law (*hō kuyō*). Gokuyō also is characterized as the offerings of the three categories of action—thoughts, words, and deeds.

Let us focus on three elements. First, material offerings (*zai no kuyō*) are offerings we make of material goods, food, and other things. Next, the offering of physical action (*mi no kuyō*), signifies offerings we make with our body, such as cleaning the temple and assisting in other ways. Finally, the offering of the Law (*hō no kuyō*) refers to assiduously exerting our efforts in doing shakubuku and propagating the Law.

Material offerings refer to the Gokuyō that we ordinarily offer to the Gohonzon in our local temples and propagation centers. These material offerings represent the foundation that will enable true Buddhism to be propagated into the future. They function to protect the three treasures. Twenty-sixth High Priest Nichikan Shonin states:

Certainly, without fail, faith is singularly most important. Even if you pile high a mountain of treasures and present it as a Gokuyō offering, it is not worthwhile, if you do not have faith. If you possess true faith, even if the offering is as miniscule as a drop of water or a particle of dust, you will achieve tremendous karmic effects.

*(Letter to Matto Jihē [Matto jihē dono gohō],
stored in Myōkiji Temple)*

Nichikan Shonin explains that our true sincerity in faith is most important when we make Gokuyō offerings and that it is essential for us to make the utmost offering possible, appropriate for our respective means and positions.

It is a matter of course that we, as priests and lay believers who believe in true Buddhism, must try our best to live a solid, stable life. At the same time, we should cultivate our faith so that we are able to do our best to present our utmost Gokuyō offerings for the sake of the true Law, when it is truly necessary.

Next, let us focus on the offering of physical action. This includes activities such as cleaning the temple, assisting with tozan pilgrimages, and other actions to protect the Gohonzon and its surroundings.

I ask you all to willingly participate in these activities, such as helping with the reception during temple ceremonies, assisting with various tasks, cleaning and tidying up after the Oko Ceremonies, and volunteering for the major temple clean-up. The temple, which is the training hall for our faith, is where the Gohonzon resides. Keeping the temple clean is a wonderful form of Buddhist training. We must keep our local temple clean and exert our utmost efforts in our activities of faith, with a refreshed spirit in both body and mind. Doing so will enable us to achieve great benefits, based on our life force to protect and uphold true Buddhism.

Finally, the offering of the Law means to put into action the correct doctrine of the true Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin. It is to do Gongyō and chant Daimoku to the Gohonzon. Furthermore, it is to do shakubuku—to tell people, who have yet to uphold true Buddhism, about the greatness of this practice. It is also to help people who are new to this Buddhism, by teaching them the actual practice and helping them develop their faith.

This is the “Year to do shakubuku, develop your faith, and help others develop their faith and practice.” What we can do now is to advance decisively in our practice of shakubuku, as an offering of the Law. As our offering of physical action, we can plan our tozan pilgrimages and attendance at temple events, in our spirit of protection for the Head Temple and the local temples. Furthermore, as our material offering, we can repay our debts of gratitude by courageously advancing toward the grand occasion of the 800th anniversary of the birth of our Founder Nichiren Daishonin. In particular, the foremost priority is none other than thoroughly achieving our shakubuku goal, which is definitely a repayment of our gratitude to Nichiren Daishonin.

High Priest Nichinyo Shonin gave us the following guidance about the benefits and positive karmic causes of doing shakubuku:

When we do shakubuku, we can expiate the karmic offences of slander from the remotest past of our lives. We can receive benefits spanning this and future existences, and we can achieve happiness both for ourselves and for others.

*(Collected Sermons of High Priest Nichinyo Shonin
[Goshinan-shū], vol. 7, p. 65)*

Let’s be mindful of conducting our Buddhist practice in perfect unity between priests and lay believers, based on the spirit of many in body, one in mind. Let’s uphold the High Priest’s guidance, and bring salvation through shakubuku to as many people as possible who are lost in confusion and delusion.