

**WORDS TO WIN BY
ATTAINING THE FRUIT OF BUDDHAHOOD
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From "Earthly Desires Are Enlightenment," The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 317–20.

I deeply appreciate your visit here and your constant concern over the numerous persecutions that have befallen me. I do not regret meeting with such great persecutions as the votary of the Lotus Sutra. However many times I were to repeat the cycle of birth and death, no life could be as fortunate as this. [If not for these troubles,] I might have remained in the three or four evil paths. But now, to my great joy, I am sure to sever the cycle of the sufferings of birth and death, and attain the fruit of Buddhahood. (WND, 317)

Nichiren Daishonin wrote "Earthly Desires are Enlightenment" in 1272 while in exile on Sado Island. The recipient, Shijo Kingo, was a samurai and physician who served the Ema family, the branch of the Hojo clan that ruled the nation from the military capital of Kamakura. The Hojo clan were regents of the shogun and responsible for the Daishonin's exile to Sado.

In the above passage, the Daishonin praises Shijo Kingo's faith and expresses appreciation for his sincere dedication and support. Shijo Kingo accompanied the Daishonin to the execution grounds at Tatsunokuchi Beach during an illegal attempt to end his life by the military government's deputy chief of police. Kingo had resolved to die by his mentor's side. Following the unsuccessful attempt to execute the Daishonin by the military authorities, he was exiled to Sado island.

The Tatsunokuchi Persecution of Sept. 12, 1271, is regarded as a pivotal moment in the Daishonin's life. It marks the point at which he "cast off the transient and revealed the true." This refers to the Buddha's act of discarding a provisional status in order to reveal his or her true identity.

"Now, to my great joy, I am sure to sever the cycle of the sufferings of birth and death, and attain the fruit of Buddhahood," the Daishonin says. As the votary of the Lotus Sutra, he propagated its essence in exact accord with its teachings, and for this reason, just as the sutra predicts, he was assailed by an endless storm of persecution from corrupt government and religious leaders. Amid such dire circumstances as exile to the desolate and forbidding island of Sado, he rejoiced in encountering persecutions, for they confirmed his identity as a votary of the Lotus Sutra. He did not regret meeting with any of these sufferings, because they allowed him to cast off his provisional identity and attain Buddhahood. He proclaimed that "no life could be as fortunate as this." He was filled with immeasurable joy even while undergoing tremendous hardship.

When I personally confront a crisis or a problem, I usually do not delight in the appearance of my obstacle. However, after chanting for a while and reading *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* or SGI President Ikeda's guidance, I begin to put my problems into perspective. I am reminded that if it were not for all the previous sufferings and obstacles I have overcome in my years of practice, I would not have developed my faith nor the incredible good fortune I enjoy today. I also realize that by facing each problem — be it

health, career, family relationships or whatever—and using my Buddhist practice to transform it into a source of enlightenment, I will, through my victory, be able to encourage another person to win in his or her circumstances. In this way of practice, I, too, can “sever the cycle of birth and death and attain the fruit of Buddhahood,” transforming my earthly desires into enlightenment.