

LEARNING FROM SHIJO KINGO — 4
Nothing Can Stop Our Enlightenment
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Believe in this mandala [the Gohonzon] with all your heart. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle? (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 119)

In August 1273, Nichiren wrote this letter to Shijo Kingo and his wife upon receiving the news that their infant daughter, Kyo'o, had fallen seriously ill. Being a physician himself, Kingo must have felt all the more helpless about his daughter's illness.

The couple, encouraged by their teacher's compassion and confidence, renewed their faith in the Gohonzon and prayed powerfully for the recovery of their daughter. As a result, Kyo'o regained her good health. This passage teaches us the importance of faith and prayer in the face of severe difficulties such as illness.

Several years ago, I accompanied a Soka Gakkai vice president to the East Coast as an interpreter. After one meeting, a man in a wheelchair approached the Japanese leader and asked for advice. The man explained how it was medically impossible for him to walk again and how miserable and hopeless his life was.

Quoting this passage, the man asked the leader: "Will I walk again? Or is this passage a lie?"

As I was busily taking notes for interpretation, I was growing curious as to how the leader would respond. I had seen and heard of some SGI members who had overcome terminal illness. But at the same time, I knew that other members die of sickness. Maybe this passage, I thought, does not apply to every illness.

Looking at the leader, I felt that he was well aware of the man's frustration and despair. The leader, after patiently listening to all the man had to say, stated that there was no falsehood whatsoever in the passage and urged him to have faith in the Gohonzon to overcome his suffering.

He then started to explain the meaning of "What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?" Here Nichiren reassures us that no sickness can be an obstacle to our enlightenment — that is, happiness — the vice president said. He does not make any exception to this promise. As long as we maintain faith in the Gohonzon, nothing — not terminal cancer or AIDS nor any difficulty, be it a relationship, financial or health problem — can be an obstacle to our happiness.

The leader said to the man candidly that he was not sure if the man would walk again. "But I'm absolutely convinced," he continued, "that as long as you pray powerfully to the Gohonzon, although you may not walk, it will not in the least hinder you from becoming happy. Rather, because of your disability, you will enjoy even more freedom than those who can walk and run."

I saw the weight of the man's suffering, so heavy on his heart minutes ago, suddenly lift. The man's face lit up with his rekindled hope.

In this passage, Nichiren inspires us to not give up our faith in any circumstance, because with faith in the Gohonzon no obstacle can become an obstacle to our happiness. This experience helped me broaden my perspective and reminded me that I should not limit the power of faith.

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