

# The Parable of the Gem in the Robe

March 31, 2013

My sermon today is on the “Parable of the Gem in the Robe.” This is one of the seven parables in the Lotus Sutra. It is found in the Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples (*Gohyaku deshi juki*; eighth) chapter.

The following is a summary of the parable:

There was a man who went to the house of a good friend. After drinking some wine, he became drunk and lay down to sleep. At that time, the friend had to go out on official business. Before leaving, he took a priceless jewel and sewed it into the lining of the sleeping friend’s robe.

The man was drunk and asleep and knew nothing about it. When he awakened, he set out on a journey and wandered through other countries. He encountered hard times, and he experienced tremendous difficulties in his search for food and clothing. He expended a great deal of effort and was joyful and satisfied with the meager amount that he was able to secure for himself.

Some time later, the wandering man was able to meet again with his close friend. The friend said to him, “My friend, why should you undergo these hardships to obtain food and clothing? In the past, I wanted to ensure that you would be able to live in comfort, so I took a priceless jewel—valuable enough to satisfy your every desire—and sewed it into the lining of your robe. It must still be there in the lining of your robe, and yet, you have sought to live a life of hardship. Your spirit is worn, you have undergone difficulties, and you are satisfied with only a bit of food and clothing. How foolish of you!

“My friend, you are able to take the jewel and exchange it for necessary goods. You can have whatever you wish and you will never again experience any wants.”

This is the Parable of the Gem in the Robe. The arhats further stated the following about this parable:

When the Buddha was still a bodhisattva, he taught and converted us, inspiring in us the determination to seek the Buddha's all encompassing wisdom. But in time, we forgot all that. We became unaware and unknowing. Having attained the way of the arhat, we supposed that we had attained nirvana. We were satisfied with what little we achieved. However, we have not yet lost the desire for comprehensive wisdom.

Now, the Buddha awakens us and makes us aware that our doctrine of nirvana does not represent true enlightenment. For the first time, we are able to realize that the teachings taught thus far have been good expedients. We were instructed in this way and made aware by the Buddha, who now has bestowed on us the prophecy of enlightenment.

In this parable, the man who did not realize that a priceless jewel was sewn into his robe represents the people of the two vehicles of learning and realization. The close friend who sewed the jewel into the robe signifies the Buddha. The priceless jewel is none other than the Lotus Sutra, which propounds the doctrine of the one vehicle. The satisfaction that the man experienced from obtaining minimal food and clothing represents the attachment that those in the two vehicles possess towards the achievement of nirvana.

The people who lived during the lifetime of the Buddha received their instruction as a result of a karmic bond that they possessed with Shakyamuni. Eventually, they were able to attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra.

We, as individuals in the Latter Day of the Law, are common mortals characterized as "not yet innately possessing good causes." We must never lose sight of the fact that, by embracing the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws—the priceless jewel that was bestowed upon us by the True Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin—and by sincerely chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, we are able to manifest Buddhahood.

The Daishonin stated the following in the “Orally Transmitted Teachings” (“*Ongi kuden*”):

This chapter describes the priceless jewel that was sewn into the lining of the robe. Indeed, Nichiren and his disciples, who chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, embrace the jewel of wisdom of the one vehicle of the mystic Law (*Myoho*). The mind of faith is comparable to the jewel that is sewn in the robe.

(*Gosho*, p. 1747)

Although we are common mortals, when we chant Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, our faith will deepen and, on a fundamental level, we can realize the existence of our profound karmic bond with the True Buddha.

In “The True Object of Worship,” the Daishonin wrote:

Showing profound compassion for those ignorant of the gem of *ichinen sanzen*, the True Buddha wrapped it within the single phrase Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo, with which he then adorned the necks of those living in the Latter Day.

(*Gosho*, p. 662; *MW-1*, p. 82)

Let us all pledge to advance ever more, with the profound conviction that we will be able to manifest a truly mystic life condition by chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo.