

Question: What is the significance of beating the drum at the temple?

At the temple, when we chant Daimoku after Gongyo, a drum is beaten. There are various reasons for this. Here is an explanation of the three major significant points regarding the drum.

1. To unite our minds as one

The first reason why the drum is beaten is to enable us to chant in unison. Imagine if, when we recite Gongyo and chant Daimoku, the majority of people chanted at their own speed. What would happen? The answer is simple. We would not be able to chant harmoniously. The Daishonin states that *itai doshin* is important in our faith and practice. He teaches that even though we are of different bodies, when we strive toward the same goal of kosen-rufu, our objective will be achieved without fail. In order to have *itai doshin*, it is most important that we chant earnestly with one mind. The drum helps fulfill this important role.

2. To offer the sound of the drum

There are many ways of making offerings to the Gohonzon. It is a matter of course to offer money or food, but also we can offer our service through such efforts as cleaning the temple. Similarly, the sound of the bell or the drum also can be an offering. In Buddhist literature, it is often said that various kinds of music were offered to praise the Buddha. If you have an opportunity to beat the drum, please do your best, since you are making an offering to the Gohonzon with each beat.

3. To create a poison drum relationship

In the Nirvana Sutra, there is the story of the poison drum. Suppose someone smears a drum with poison. If this poison drum is beaten, the sound will penetrate into the ears of the people who have no desire to hear it. Still, however, they will die from the poison.

The words “poison” or “die” are frightening, but they are used as metaphors. The point is not that people will really die. This story shows that even if a person refuses to listen, we should nevertheless teach him or her about true Buddhism and enable them to make a connection to the Gohonzon. Even people who resist saying, “I do not want to practice,” will develop a karmic bond as a result, and this eventually will lead them to happiness.

The important point here is that we should talk about our faith and practice with others. Some people with whom we speak honestly will take faith through a positive relationship (*jun'en*) and others will form a reverse relationship (*gyaku'en*) but eventually will take faith in the future. There are times when we are persecuted by people who oppose our faith and practice. This may discourage some people from doing shakubuku. However, the Daishonin states the following in "Attaining Enlightenment at the Initial Stage of Faith through the Lotus Sutra":

Therefore one should by all means persist in preaching the Lotus Sutra and causing them to hear it. Those who put their faith in it will surely attain Buddhahood, while those who slander it will establish a "poison-drum relationship" with it and will likewise attain Buddhahood.

(*MW-6*, p. 197)

Since the Daishonin's true Buddhism is the only teaching in this era that will lead the people to happiness, it is important to do shakubuku by sincerely talking to as many people as possible—even those who don't want to listen. The beating of the drum at the temple has an extremely important significance, because many people can be heard chanting Daimoku to the rhythm of the drum. This is shakubuku.

Conclusion

The formalities (*kegi*), such as how to conduct Gongyo and how to make offerings to the Gohonzon, have truly important meanings. When we make offerings to the Gohonzon, it is especially important to offer courteously with a sincere spirit. When you protect the Gohonzon with great care, you will be protected without fail.

At some temples, the young adults are taught how to beat the drum. If you have the opportunity to learn, please remember the significance of the drum and practice seriously.