

Question: What is Slander?

Slander (Jpn. *hobo*) is a Buddhist term. It is short for “slandering the true Law.” The Chinese character *ho* in *hobo* means “slander.” This refers to language and actions that go against or make light of the true teaching. The Daishonin states the following:

Slander means to go against true Buddhism.

(*Gosho*, p. 286 [summary])

He also states:

Slander means to slander the Buddha and the priesthood.

(*Gosho*, p. 608 [summary])

When we disparage or harbor disbelief toward the Buddha and refuse to listen to the High Priest’s guidance, we are slandering the three treasures of the Buddha, Law, and priesthood. To put it simply, slander means actions and words equating to what the Buddha admonishes us “not to do.”

One should be careful not to further commit slander by agreeing with individuals who continuously slander. The Daishonin teaches us:

Nor should you associate with slanderers, for if you do, you will share the same guilt as they. This you should fear above all.

(*Gosho*, p. 1458; *MW-1*, p. 256)

If you cooperate with people who criticize true Buddhism, and if you do not correct people who believe in teachings other than the Daishonin’s true Law by saying “What you believe in is not the true teaching,” then this is the same as committing slander. One should also avoid visiting or making offerings at religious shrines, or purchasing “good luck charms” or tags. These actions go against the Daishonin’s teachings. In Buddhism, there is a doctrine called the 14 slanders. If we become lazy in our Buddhist practice, skipping Gongyo, Shodai, and shakubuku, or if we act in an envious manner and speak ill of Nichiren Shoshu priests or Hokkeko members, these actions all constitute slander.

Strict Admonishment Against Slander

The Daishonin shows us that the offense of slander is even more serious than committing the five cardinal sins (*Gosho*, p.609). The five cardinal sins are to kill one's father, to kill one's mother, to kill an arhat, to injure a Buddha causing him to bleed, and to cause disharmony between the priesthood and laity. When we commit slander, we make causes that will lead us to a truly unhappy life. In Nichiren Shoshu, slander was strictly admonished more than 700 years ago. Nikko Shonin firmly protected the Daishonin's teachings and strictly admonished against slander. The Daishonin states the following in the *Gosho*, "Admonition Against Slander":

To seek enlightenment without repudiating slander is as futile as trying to find water in the midst of fire or fire in the midst of water.

(*Gosho*, p.1040; *MW-1* p. 165)

The Daishonin teaches us that if we commit slander, we never can be happy. Please remember that it is a matter of course that we should not slander. The admonitions we receive to refrain from slander are for our own benefit. Also, we must shakubuku as many people as possible.

Good Luck Charms and Holidays of Other Religions

In Japan, there is a custom of decorating *Darumas*—Bodhidharma dolls, which are considered to be symbols of optimism and good fortune—or *maneki neko* (lucky cats). Some people believe that these ornaments bring prosperity in business and in personal life. When Japanese students visit shrines during school field trips, they find many lucky charms and tags for sale, and it is a Japanese custom to purchase such amulets, which they believe will protect them from car accidents and help them to be successful in school. These charms, however, hold no meaning. Purchasing such items and wearing them or hanging them up in the house is a negative cause that goes against the teachings of true Buddhism.

Two very popular holidays in the West are Christmas and Hanukah. Christmas is a Christian holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Hanukah is a Jewish holiday celebrating the rededication of the Second Temple. Nichiren Shoshu believers do not observe holidays such as these, which are festivals of other religions. Participating in holidays and ceremonies of other religions constitutes slander, since these are provisional

teachings. These events may seem to be enjoyable, but we firmly should keep our promise to the Daishonin and be extremely cautious not to commit slander. Hokkeko believers with questions regarding slander should seek guidance from their chief priest.