

THE MIDDLE WAY

ADVOCATING THE TRUE TEACHINGS OF NICHIREN THE TRUE BUDDHA

SPRING

2014

ICHINEN SANZEN IN PRACTICAL TERMS

Reverend Raidō Hirota
International Meeting
September 2012

QUESTION: What does *ichinen sanzen* mean, and how do we use it in our daily life? Obviously *ichinen sanzen* is a very complex theory. Is the theory of *ichinen sanzen* teaching us that all life pervades all life? Is it a way of saying all life is connected and interlocked and related to everything?

Reverend Raidō Hirota (RH): When written in Japanese characters *ichi* means one and *nen* means desire, wish, or prayer. *Ichinen* is a nano second of time throughout a day when a thought pops up in our minds. It also means the single thought that pops up; tiny moments. In addition, *ichinen* is infinitesimal existence that is floating around in the air. The best thing about the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin¹ is that all these minute existences that we cannot see have the Buddha-nature². They all have the life of Namumyōhōrengekyō³. The fact that Nichiren



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The Middle Way

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¹ Nichiren Daishonin - Daishonin – (1222-1282) the true Buddha who realized the Law of Namumyohorengkyo imbedded in the Lotus Sutra and established the Law as the means by which all living beings can become enlightened.

² Buddha-nature – the inherent cause or potential at the core of one’s life that allows anyone to realize Buddhahood.

Daishonin's Buddhism teaches this is what makes this Buddhism great!

There is a Buddhist concept called *sanzen daisen sekai*. *Sanzen daisen sekai* includes the universe, the spiritual realm, and time – past, present, and future. *Sanzen* of *ichinen sanzen* is derived from *sanzen daisen sekai*. All the individual lives that are contained within *sanzen daisen sekai* are connected and are thereby actually one life. Hence this equates with *ichinen*. When compared with the realm of *sanzen daisen sekai* our human existence is tiny. It's like a microscopic speck of dust that you can't really see. But we are all connected, and together make up *sanzen daisen sekai*. All life out in the greater universe supports you, and you support all life. This connectedness is *ichinen sanzen*.

In Christianity, they say that god created your life and all life. By contrast, Nichiren Daishonin's teachings explain that your life is born through the connections or relations between one life and another life. So each life is dependent on other life and supported by other life. It is that relationship that causes us to exist. Without each other we could not exist. I feel that the concept of *ichinen sanzen* really explains how things are on this planet. If you observe the food chain, and the way we all exist, you can see that *ichinen sanzen* is very realistic. It relates to us, and becomes very easy to understand. The Daimoku⁴ that represents the concept of *ichinen sanzen* is Namumyōhōrengekyō.

Believer 1 (B1): The question asks how do we use *ichinen sanzen* in our daily life, but would the more appropriate question be, how do we perceive it in our daily life? *Ichinen Sanzen* is a way of understanding how we as individuals fit into the universe. You can't differentiate between yourself and the rest of life.

RH: This concept is the center of the teachings. It all depends on how you decide on what you're going to do with that. You ask yourself, how do I want to take this and apply it to my daily life?

B1: So this is the use part. In that sense, depending on how much you understand about life is how you live your life and how you respect other life forms and other human beings. How you understand *ichinen sanzen* and how you understand life will determine how you live your life and how you respect other life, knowing that your life is dependent on that other life. There's really no difference. It's the same life.

RH: The first part of the 24 characters of Bodhisattva Jofukyo⁵ explains *ichinen sanzen* as well:

*I respect everyone deeply,
I do not despise anyone, not even a little
or look down on anyone with contempt
Because everyone has the capacity to become*

³ Namumyohorengekyo – the Mystic Law which enlightens all Buddhas; the Supreme Law of life and the universe; the Buddha-nature in all things.

⁴ Daimoku – the title of a sutra; the invocation of the title of a sutra.

⁵ Bodhisattva Jofukyo – Bodhisattva Fukyo – a bodhisattva described in the 20th chapter of the Lotus Sutra who revered everyone for their innate Buddha-nature, and was persecuted because of his compassionate behavior.

Reciting these “24 Characters” of Bodhisattva Jofukyo and trying to understand what it means can help you direct your life based on what you believe in – what you practice.

Christians use the cross, Jesus, or the Virgin Mary as their object of worship to look at and to pray to. In Japan, Buddhists use Shakyamuni Buddha, Bodhisattva Kannon, or Amida Buddha as objects of worship. Whether it’s Christianity or Buddhism, all of these objects of worship are represented in human form, and people pray to them asking for help or protection or support. That’s what these objects of worship are used for. However, in Nichiren Daishonin’s true Buddhism the object of worship – Gohonzon⁶ – is composed of characters – words, and concepts on a piece of paper. It’s not shaped like a human being. It’s very abstract. Because the Gohonzon is written characters on a scroll, people who practice and believe in these teachings must ask themselves, what is Gohonzon trying to tell me? You really have to get down to asking, what do these characters mean? If an object of worship is shaped like a human being, you would really not have to ask or think about what the object means or what it represents because it is already actualized, and has a distinct form. All you would have to do is ask it for things. But with Nichiren Daishonin’s Gohonzon you really have to contemplate what it means to you. How do you understand it? And the effort you put into trying to understand it is the practice. To be a practitioner of this religion, you cannot be someone who just chants and does not think about it. That’s not going to work. There are four fundamental things you must do as a practitioner:

1. Faith – you have to believe
2. Practice – do gongyo and Odaimoku and teach others to practice
3. Learn – study this religion and gain an understanding of Buddhism
4. Shakabuku – you must explain the teachings to others

Believer 2 (B2): This is probably not related to our discussion of *ichinen sanzen*, but in the Third Silent Prayer it says: “I also express my heartfelt gratitude for His beneficence and pray that His profound benevolent power may ever more widely prevail.” What does that mean? Why do we say it?

RH: In Japanese that sentence reads: *Goikō baizō, Goriyaku Kōdai, Gohōonshatoku no Ontameni.* Just because you chant Odaimoku, it is not by your own power or will that you attain Buddhahood. If you are sincere, the pure heart that you feel while you chant to Gohonzon is what will access Gohonzon. That effort and that feeling is what accesses Gohonzon. And as long as your actions are pure the Buddhas will recognize it and direct you to the right path. It is not you alone making it happen. Your pure actions are like a signal that is recognized by the Buddhas. Again, remember Gohonzon is very abstract. You have to seek its meaning.

⁶ Gohonzon – the scroll that is the object of worship of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, representing the universal Law of Namumyohorengekyo and the Buddha-nature in all things.

Goikō baizō means, by praying or chanting Odaimoku you are hoping that Buddha is well and good and will continue to teach us. This phrase indicates that you are wishing that your Odaimoku becomes food or nourishment for the Buddha.

Goriyaku Kōdai represents the chance to realize that what you have been doing might not be good or right. For example, you may think, “Oh I really don’t like this person,” because from your point of view that person is not a great person. But that doesn’t mean it’s true. Your thinking is self-centered. So reciting this phrase silently gives you the opportunity to self-reflect, allowing you to reconsider and recognize that maybe what you think isn’t right.

Gohōonshatoku no Ontameni means that while receiving the goodness that this practice of Buddhism affords, you are going to continue following these teachings and practice as a believer.

B1: Is this part of the silent prayer related to the passage in the Hoben chapter⁷ of Lotus Sutra⁸ that states this sutra can only be understood between a Buddha and a Buddha? You said that just chanting to the Gohonzon doesn’t access Gohonzon. It’s your intent—your heart—that makes the connection. So is that what this passage from the Third silent prayer means? It’s our Buddha heart that connects with the Buddha? It’s not our conscious mind. It’s only the purity of our heart that can make that connection.

RH: Usually people believe that Buddha is an existence or a state of being that has no confusion. They think it’s a state of completion. But the Buddha in the Lotus Sutra is the same as us. The Buddha of the Lotus Sutra has the Ten Worlds⁹: the life of hellishness, confusion, sadness, difficulty, and the like. All these things are experienced by the Buddha in the Lotus Sutra. In the Lotus Sutra, where it says, “Between a Buddha and a Buddha,” the first Buddha is Nichiren Daishonin, and the second Buddha is us. You might be thinking, well, I’m no where near being a Buddha. But even the person who has such confusion in his or her life, as long as he or she believes in Namumyōhōrengekyō, and tries to look to Nichiren Daishonin as the role model, and desires to achieve the state or condition of life that the Daishonin achieved, that person’s heart is the Buddha.



⁷ Hoben chapter – 2nd chapter of the Lotus Sutra in which Shakyamuni declares that all Buddhas come into the world solely for the purpose of enabling all people to realize enlightenment, and that all living things have innate Buddha nature.

⁸ Lotus Sutra – the highest teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, taught in the last eight years of his life. It reveals that all life has Buddha-nature, and that the life of Buddha, and all life is eternal.

⁹ Ten Worlds – ten conditions of life that are physically and spiritually manifested in a single life. They are: Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Heaven (Rapture), Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva, Buddha.

ON A PEACEFUL LIFE

Reverend Raidō Hirota

International Meeting

October 2012

QUESTION: The sutra promises a peaceful life in this world. What is meant by a peaceful life? One certainly cannot have a life without problems and challenges.

RH: What do you think peace and happiness is?

B3: When I've made a psychological breakthrough of some sort in my mind, where I've let go of a certain perception that I might have of life, at those times there has been a great sense of relief and gratitude. Those times are the only times I've felt a certain kind of peace. I've read that goshō that says there is no greater happiness than chanting Namumyōhōrengekyō. And there have been moments that I have felt that. But I'm an emotional human being who fluctuates between good times and bad. Happiness is not a constant feeling in my chanting. Maybe it will be some day. Right now there are times when chanting is a struggle and there are times when it is not. And there are times when I believe there is no greater happiness than chanting Namumyōhōrengekyō, and there I times when I don't.

B4: I feel the same way. I fluctuate too.

RH: There are three basic rules in general Buddhism: 1) don't kill; 2) don't lie; and 3) don't steal. This is the general law. For people to live in this world there are things you have to abide by; rules you have to follow so that you can co-exist with people whose views, and ideas, and understandings differ from yours. You don't have to agree, or subscribe, or conform to all that others believe or follow, but at minimum there are certain rules we all must follow so that we can live as human beings in a civil society among other living beings. So these three rules – don't kill, don't lie, don't steal – are the truths in society. And I suppose they would be the basis for a peaceful life in society.

At this time our society is judgmental and ruled by prejudice: who is stronger who is weaker; who is better, who is worse. So based on this, we are living in a world where everybody is seeking happiness. In our society we focus on progress, whether it's in the field of medicine, education, technology, etc. We focus on going forward from where we are. What ever technology we have developed we want to make it better, or take it to the next level. We focus on continuous improvement. Many people try to find happiness in that. But what happens is that more complex issues develop from that notion of happiness. And that leads to unhappiness. Consequently, we must be mindful of that and realize that focusing on progress in the pursuit of happiness will probably only bring about more unhappiness.

I've spoken about progress, now I'd like speak about discovery. The word "discover" when broken down means to remove the cover—to remove whatever idea or notion you have about something and learn something new, and thereby finding or understanding something that you didn't know. That spirit matches the seeking spirit of Buddhism.

The challenge that you have when you focus on progress, let's say in the field of medicine, is that when you find a new disease you break it down to its elemental parts and find some kind of cure. But then something new arises—there's a mutation of this disease, or you're not satisfied and you try to find some new or better medicine. This goes on and on. The eventual purpose of doing this is to prevent people from dying—so that people will live forever. But that is not the reality of human existence. People are not machines; they will die eventually. As a result of this ongoing progress confusion sets in. I'm not saying that progress is all bad. But progress has two faces. One creates a gap or weak point, the other manages it. That is why I emphasize the difference between discovery and progress.

There are layers over our eyes, quite like contact lenses, which are made up of desire, prejudice and such like. These things are attached to our eyes and become a part of who we are. Buddhism, however, encourages us to keep peeling away these contact lenses from our eyes so that we can clearly see what is going on.

B1: I often wonder about the progress science is making, such as making bionic parts. I wonder how far this can go because it's distancing us from our humanity. I suppose if I were in need of one of those parts I would feel differently, but I also wonder if at the extreme end of this it will take people to a point where they start seeking within themselves and realize the Buddha-nature within?

RH: Two important points when you practice this religion are: 1) a sense of value—of what is the most important thing; and 2) your purpose—what is in the center of your heart. You say, "Oh, I don't want to chant. This is really hard. I'm so tired." While you understand that we are all human, and there are good times and difficult times when you practice this Buddhism as described by Believers 3 and 4, at this point is when you remember or realize that you are removing the contact lenses from your eyes. You realize it is hard, yes, but this is what you do—what you are committed to. It is here where real happiness lies. To realize this is the key. To realize that you are taking away the contact lenses from your eyes so that you can see clearly is the key to happiness.

With Namumyōhōrengekyō all sentient beings have a chance to become Buddha. That realization is absolute peace and happiness. If you compare Buddhism to Islam, Judaism and Christianity, you can see that it is different from these other religions, which have a history of "Holy Wars" and "Just Wars" whose rationale is to kill people because of their opposing principles or beliefs. And nowadays it seems that killing is still acceptable within some of these religions. In Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, however, you do not deny other people, spiritually or physically. To kill others is to deny them: to deny their point of view; to deny the way they are. What Nichiren Daishonin's teachings tell us is to continue to try to communicate with others even though you don't share the same views. Never give up on trying to communicate. There will never be an absolute happiness or peace in life for people

who practice a religion that teaches people that is okay to kill others if they don't believe what you believe.

B1: When you're living your life with Buddhism in the center, and you're peeling away these contact lenses that are covering your eyes, it's hard to live in a world where other people aren't doing that. When you say keep talking to them, do you mean to continue to talk to them about Buddhism, and continue to be the compassionate Buddhist we are developing into, and have that kind of influence in our environment? Is that what you mean? Not only talking to them about Buddhism, but living your life as a Buddhist? In a society that doesn't have the same values, it's a difficult life to pursue. Most of the world resorts to killing others when there is a dispute. That's how countries are ruled.

RH: Your heart is the world. Your parents and friends are the world out there. It is important to tell lots of people about Buddhism, but the world consists of individuals. Communication starts with one individual: a family member or a friend. Then one individual after another eventually becomes the world. And of course, there will be times when you feel your point is not well communicated, or not well received. But continue to do so because nothing goes to waste.

About peeling off the contact lenses: Other people can give advice, but they cannot remove the contact lenses from the eyes of another—by force or otherwise. Only the individual can remove the contact lenses from his own eyes. It's up to each individual to do it for him- or herself. The individual has to commit himself and decide that this is what he wants to do. A person who is giving advice may feel a sense of emptiness or frustration because his point is not well communicated or well taken. But ultimately, a person receiving advice has to realize it on his own. So all you can do is be there for him. Keep giving advice.

B3: It's very easy to accept this teaching when you're feeling it. But it's very difficult to continue through adversity. It's making a commitment to change. When I was first introduced to this Buddhism at the age of 20, they kept telling me I didn't have to change. The attitude towards Gongyo¹⁰ and Daimoku and Gohonzon was that it does it for you. I've never been able to accept that. How much of this journey is based on my own action, and how much is based on the Mystic Law¹¹ and mystical happenings? There's a ton of stuff happening in the universe and inside myself that can be categorized as mystical that I can't understand, and that I am in awe of and moved by. Then there are practical things. My life now is consumed by work and domesticated things: taking care of my wife and kids. But when I first started practicing at 20 years old it was all about the mystical side. I was told to just chant, and amazing things will happen. I could not be farther from that in my present life.

RH: We tend to forget that we are being protected. It has become a given; a normal, everyday thing. So it's something we are no longer grateful or thankful for. A beautiful day--we forget how precious that is. When it becomes an everyday thing, we think it is normal.

¹⁰ Gongyo – the practice of Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism which includes the morning and evening recitation of the 2nd and 16th chapters of the Lotus Sutra and chanting Namumyōhōrengekyō.

¹¹ Mystic Law – the Law of Namumyōhōrengekyō, the ultimate Law of life and the universe.

Suppose there is a person who is sick. He goes to the hospital where the doctors prescribe some medicine. The sick person goes home and takes the medicine. Then in a few days or weeks he says, “Wow! I’m feeling great. This is working.” For good health, he needs to take the medicine everyday. But after awhile, he levels off and thinks, “Well I’m not feeling tired anymore, but I’m no longer getting that ‘Wow!’ feeling. I think the medicine has stopped working.” But the fact that he can maintain a consistent state of health is because he is taking the medication. Yet, he is not satisfied. He wants more.

The Soka Gakkai teaches that its members can be better, and happier than other people. When you were 20 and introduced to this Buddhism by the Soka Gakkai, they told you, you could be happier – happier than you are right now. However, human happiness is not like climbing stairs. The fact that you are not extremely ill, you have a great job, your wife is well, your kids are well, life might be hectic, but you can find gratitude in that. What you think is normal, is not normal. It is a gift. That you have such a life is a gift. That’s what you have to remember.

RISSHU-E

Celebrating the Declaration of True Buddhism

APRIL 28, 1253

JUST BEFORE DAWN on the 28th day of the fourth month in the year 1253 Zeshō-bō Renchō¹² left his sanctum at Seichō-ji temple at Mount Kiyosumi, and climbed the hilltop overlooking the Pacific Ocean at Kasagamori. At the first sign of the sun on the horizon his voice resounded with *Namumyohorengekyo* in salutation. In that instant, before the sun, heaven and earth as witnesses, mankind’s first invocation of the supreme Law was issued and the true practice of Buddhism for the Latter Day was proclaimed.

Myohorengekyo is the Japanese transliteration of the title of the Lotus Sutra as it was translated into Chinese from Sanskrit by Kumarajiva¹³ (344-409). In “The One Essential Phrase”¹⁴ Nichiren Daishonin explains the significance of this phrase:

. . .[T]he Lotus Sutra defines our life as the Buddha’s life,
our mind as the Buddha’s wisdom and our actions as the Buddha’s
behavior. . . .Namumyohorengekyo is only one phrase but it
contains the essence of the entire sutra. . . .Everything has its

¹² Zeshō-bō Renchō – Nichiren Daishonin was named Zennichimaro at birth. In 1237, he was ordained as a priest and was renamed Zeshō-bō Renchō. 1253, after declaring the establishment of True Buddhism he changed his name to Nichiren.

¹³ Kumarajiva – an Indian scholar of Mahayana Buddhism who translated 35 Buddhist scriptures into Chinese, including the *Myōhōrengekyō*.

¹⁴ *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. 1, 0. 221-222

essential point, and the heart of the Lotus Sutra is its title, Namumyohorengekyo. Truly, if you chant this in the morning and evening, you are correctly reading the entire Lotus SutraA Law this easy to embrace and this easy to practice was taught for the sake of all mankind in this evil age of the Latter Day of the Law.

When Renchō intoned this simple phrase the audience of the sun, earth and heaven had no objections. His human audience, he would soon discover, was of a different mind. At noon of the same day, when the sun was high overhead, Renchō stood before an audience of his peers, family and members of the local community in a hall at Seichō-ji Temple. In a dynamic voice full of resolve, with palms pressed together in prayer position, he pronounced Namumyohorengekyo for human ears to hear for the first time. From there Renchō went on to denounce the four major sects of the day – Ritsu, Zen, Nembutsu and Shingon. At the end of his discourse he announced that he was changing his name to Nichiren. Nichiren means sun-lotus, and its significance is that it suggests Nichiren attained enlightenment by himself. To realize the truth on one’s own, without the aid of a teacher, is the sign of a sage.

Two years later, in 1255, Nichiren explained the purpose of chanting Namumyohorengekyo in “On Attaining Buddhahood”¹⁵:

If you wish to free yourself from the suffering of birth and death you have endured through eternity and attain supreme enlightenment in this lifetime, you must awaken to the mystic truth which has always been within your life. This truth is Myohorengekyo, Chanting Myohorengekyo will therefore enable you to grasp the Mystic truth within you.

Risshu-e celebrates the birth of Namumyohorengekyo and True Buddhism.



¹⁵ *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. 1, p. 3

GOSHO SELECTION

THE GIFT OF RICE¹⁶

I HAVE received the sack of rice, the sack of taro and the basket of river-plants which you were so good as to send me by your servants.

Man has two kinds of treasure: clothing and food. One sutra states, "All sentient beings live on food." Man depends on food and clothing to survive in this world. For fish, water is the greatest treasure and for trees, the soil in which they grow. Man's life is sustained by what he eats. That is why food is his treasure.

However, life itself is the most precious of all treasures. Even the treasures of the entire universe cannot equal the value of a single human life. Life is like a lamp, and food like oil. When the oil is gone, the flame will die out, and without food, life will cease.

People place the word "Namu" before the names of all deities and Buddhas in worshipping them. But what is the meaning of "Namu"? This word derives from Sanskrit, and means to devote one's life. Ultimately it means to offer our lives to the Buddha. Some may have wives, children, retainers, estates, gold, silver or other treasures according to their status. Others have nothing at all. Yet whether one has wealth or not, life is still the most precious treasure. This is why the saints and sages of ancient times offered their lives to the Buddha, and were themselves able to attain Buddhahood.

Sessen Doji¹⁷ offered his body to a demon to receive a teaching composed of eight characters. Bodhisattva Yakuo¹⁸, having no oil, burned his elbow as an offering to the Lotus Sutra. In our own country, Prince Shotoku¹⁹ peeled off the skin of his hand on which to copy the Lotus Sutra, and Emperor Tenji²⁰ burned his third finger as an offering to Shakyamuni²¹ Buddha. Such austere practices are for saints and sages, but not for ordinary people.

Yet even common mortals can attain Buddhahood if they cherish one thing: earnest faith. In the deepest sense, earnest faith is the will to understand and live up to the spirit, not

¹⁶ *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, Vol. 1, p.267

¹⁷ Sessen Doji – Shakyamuni in a previous life. His resolve to attain enlightenment was tested by the god Taishaku who disguised himself as a demon. The demon said he would teach him a complete Buddhist verse only if he offered his body as food. Sessen Doji agreed, and at the moment he was about to be devoured by the demon, the demon changed back into Taishaku and praised Sessen Doji for his compassion and his commitment to seeking the Way.

¹⁸ Bodhisattva Yakuo – serves people by providing them with medicine to cure the physical and spiritual illnesses.

¹⁹ Prince Shotoku – 9574-622) – The second son of the thirty-first emperor of Japan. He was famous for his pursuit of Buddhism and for his application of the spirit of Buddhism to government.

²⁰ Emperor Tenji- (626-671) He achieved major reforms in a government modeled on the early T'ang system of China. Under this system, the emperor was central to the national government.

²¹ Shakyamuni – Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (1029 BCE – 949 BCE), the historical founder of Buddhism.

the words, of the sutras. What does this mean? In one sense, it means that offering one's only robe to the Lotus Sutra is equivalent to tearing off one's own skin, and in a time of famine, offering the Buddha the single bowl of rice on which one's life depends is to dedicate one's life to the Buddha. The blessings of such dedication are as great as those Bodhisattva Yakuo received by burning his own elbow, or Sessen Doji by offering his flesh to a demon.

Therefore, saints consecrated themselves by offering their own bodies, whereas common mortals may consecrate themselves by the sincerity with which they give. The precept of donation expounded in the seventh volume of the Maka Shikan²² in effect teaches the spirit of offering.

The true path of life lies in the affairs of this world. The Konkomyo Sutra reads, "To have a profound knowledge of this world is itself Buddhism." The Nirvana sutra reads, "All scriptures or teachings, from whatever source, are ultimately the revelation of Buddhist truth."

In contrast, the sixth volume of the Lotus Sutra reads, "No affairs of life or work are in any way different from the ultimate reality." In discussing the underlying significance of these quotations, Miao-lo²³ taught that the first two sutras are profound, but still shallow when compared to the Lotus Sutra. Whereas they relate secular matters in terms of Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra explains that secular matters ultimately are Buddhism.

The sutras which came before the Lotus Sutra taught that all phenomena derive from one's mind. The mind is like the earth, and phenomena are like the plants growing in the earth. But the Lotus Sutra teaches that the mind is one with the earth and the earth is one with its plants. The provisional sutras say that a tranquil mind is like the moon and a pure heart is like a flower, but the Lotus Sutra states that the flower and moon are themselves heart and mind. Therefore, it is obvious that rice is not merely rice but life itself.

Because the regent would not taste the sumptuous food [of true Buddhism], there was nothing more I could do, and so I retired to the forest. I am an ordinary man and find it hard to endure the winter's cold or the summer's heat. Nor do I have enough to eat. I could never match the feat of the man said to have walked ten thousand *ri*²⁴ on a single meal, or that of Confucius and his grandson, who ate only nine meals in one hundred days. Without food, I could not long continue to recite the sutra or concentrate on meditation.

Thus, your offerings are more than mere gifts. Perhaps the Lord Buddha himself advised you to care for me, or it might be that your karma from the past has impelled you to do so. It is impossible to say all I want to in this letter.

With my deep respect.



²² *Maka Shikan - Great Concentration and Insight* written by Chinese Buddhist scholar and founder a Chinese school of Buddhism, T'ien-t'ai(538-597), introduces the concept of *ichinen sanzen*.

²³ Miao-lo – (711-782) – 9th successor to the T'ien-tai sect in China. He is revered as the restorer of the sect.

²⁴ *Ri* – Equals 36 *chō*/ Between 3.9 and 4.3 km. Ten thousand *ri* here means an extremely long distance.