

THE MYSTERY

THE TRUE CONCEPT OF *ICHINEN SANZEN*

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The most important character or syllable to concentrate on when chanting daimoku is Myo. Namu-myoho-renge-kyo is all one unit, but *ichinen sanzen* is contained within the character Myo. *Ichinen* is a single thought. *Sanzen* is everything. The Soka Gakkai taught that *sanzen* is the universe. But actually *sanzen* encompasses the past, the present and the future. It is not only this dimension, it is all dimensions, encompassing totality. It is not just the material or physical aspect of life, but also the spiritual aspect, or what is in your heart - the intangibles, what you cannot touch. Compared to the Soka Gakkai's conception of *sanzen* being material, the universe, the one dimensional -- or three dimensions existing now in this present moment -- the true concept of *sanzen* is much greater, much broader, much deeper. It is the physical and spiritual dimensions throughout the three existences of past, present and future. It is all levels of reality. It is all that there is, was and will be. If you define *Myo*, it means mysterious.

Everything -- all things are connected to the heart of the Buddha. One *ichinen* holds the whole *sanzen* together. It's like a hand fan. One *ichinen* connects everything together like the pivot or screw of a fan connects all the folds of the fan. If you had two screws or pivots, one at each end of this fan, you would not be able to open it. This one screw connects all the folds. It is just this one screw that holds it all together.

Ichinen gives breadth or expansion to *sanzen*, and *sanzen* gives contraction and closure. This is ongoing, repeating itself like the beat of the heart. Imagine light expanding, then contracting and coming in as if it is being regulated with a dimmer. *Ichinen sanzen* is like this. The mystery is that we cannot understand the concept of the opening and closing. Because we can't comprehend this, we think that our life is our own. So if you think that I am me and others are others, then you won't be able to understand that you are you because others are others. The *sanzen* (the All) cannot exist without the *ichinen* (the One). Likewise, *ichinen* (the One) cannot exist without the *sanzen* (the All).

We humans believe that we would not have our lives without our parents, our grandparents and our ancestors. But before there was human life, life existed, and that life, that essence is within us.

As we move into the future, all that ever was and all that is moves into the future with us. Therefore, you cannot separate yourself from others, and why you cannot separate yourself from all else that exists in the universe. It is all One. Therefore, it is not because of your parents or grandparents that you are alive. You are alive because you have a teacher, a doctor, the police - they are all connected to you. This connection extends for an eternity through past, present and future.

Nichiren Daishonin teaches that now - this moment - is the most important point in time. The reason that this is, is because the past, the present and the future exist in this moment. All life - the water, the air we breathe, plants, society - supports our life, our existence. Before we eat a piece of meat, let's say beef, it is beef. Once we have eaten it, it becomes human because it is broken down and digested and assimilated by our bodies and becomes a part of us. No longer is it beef. It is a part of our system. Whether it is cabbage or fish it doesn't matter, once we have eaten it, it becomes the life of a human being.

The Daishonin teaches that the world isn't just for humans, it is for all life forms. If all other living things could not have Buddhahood, then human beings could not attain Buddhahood either. Human beings are not greater and other life forms lesser. A bird, a plant, a rock, a speck of dust, a man -- all living things are equal.

The air we breathe is like the beef we eat. When we breathe, the air becomes part of us - it becomes human and is no longer air. It doesn't matter if you are French, Russian, Arab or Israeli you have to breathe air to live. So if you want to live you can't say, "I'm not going to breathe this air because someone I don't like has breathed this air." That is ridiculous, we just can't do that. Everything is the same, whether it's sunlight, water or air. Overall, all life is connected. *Ichinen sanzen* (a single thought contains everything). *Sanzen ichinen* (everything within a single thought) means that everything is connected, and bound by the one Law Myohorengekyo and nothing can be severed, cut or removed from it.

Opening the fan is comparable to *ichinen sanzen*. Closing the fan is analogous to *sanzen ichinen*. The pivot or screw holding it all together is Namu-myoho-renge-kyo. What I'm saying is that *ichinen sanzen* is *Myo*. The contents of *Myo* is *ichinen sanzen* -- all things throughout the universe in the three existences of past, present and future. That is why we chant Namu-myoho-renge-kyo. Whether you understand this or not, it is still Namu-myoho-renge-kyo that is the glue, the collagen, connecting everything, one to another. However, if you don't understand this you can't pass it along to others. If you are not aware of this, then when there is a person who hears about Namu-myoho-

rengé-kyo for the first time, or whose only exposure to Namu-myoho-rengé-kyo has been through the superficial teachings of the Soka Gakkai, you will not be able to explain that you don't chant, you don't sit in front of Gohonzon sweating Odaimoku so that you'll have a happy life, make money, be healthy. The meaning and purpose for chanting is much broader and grander than that. The consequentiality and significance of this practice lies in the connection and collectivity of *Myo, ichinen sanzen*, all life and us.