

On Clothing and Food



To the lay nun:

IHAVE received the one thousand coins that you sent.

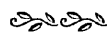
Food livens the complexion, gives one strength, and prolongs life. Clothing keeps out the cold, shields one from the heat, and hides one's shame.

When one gives things to others, one livens people's complexions, gives them strength, and enables them to prolong life.

When one lights a torch for someone at night, one brings light not only to another person but to oneself as

well. Likewise, when one livens other people's complexions, one livens one's own too, when one gives them strength, one gives oneself strength too, when one prolongs their lives, one prolongs one's own life as well.

The Lotus Sutra sustains the complexion of Shakyamuni Buddha, the strength of the World-Honored One, the life of the Thus Come One. When a person who is ailing gives alms to the Lotus Sutra, that person's illness will be lightened, that person's complexion will brighten, that person's strength will improve . . .



Background

The latter portion of this letter is missing. By one account, Nichiren Daishonin wrote it at Minobu to the mother of Nanjō Tokimitsu in 1278. Acknowledging receipt of a gift of coins, the Daishonin describes the benefits of food and clothing that sustain life. When one gives food and clothing to another, he explains, this will benefit both the receiver and giver. He

illustrates the point with a saying: "When one lights a torch for someone at night, one brings light not only to another person but to oneself as well."

He emphasizes how much greater is the benefit of making offerings to the Lotus Sutra, which sustains the complexion, strength, and life of the Buddha.