

## The Heart of the Middle Way

Hello, my name is Yugen Saito.

Today I would like to talk about the "Heart of the Middle Way.

The word "chudo" means "middle way" in Japanese.

As the saying goes, "hot and cold last until the equinoxes," after the equinoctial days of spring and autumn, the temperature of the year eases. The far shore is one of the most comfortable times of the year.

Do you know why Ohigan was set at this time of the year?

According to one theory, it is related to the teachings of the Middle Way.

The Middle Way is one of the most important teachings of Buddhism, and refers to a neutral way of being that does not run to extremes.

It is a teaching that tells us to "go neither to the left nor to the right, but to the middle, the place where there is no right or left.

Just to be clear, the middle way is not the same as middle class or moderation.

Chūryū refers to the middle ground found in comparison to others, and is used to describe social status and level of living.

Chuyou is a Confucian term that is used as a benchmark for making the most appropriate and reasonable choices in life.

Chudo is also an indicator for living, but it refers to the practice of Buddhist truth and is never a comparison or a way of life. It is important to practice by one's own will, which springs from the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha.

Living the middle way begins with acknowledging the right and the left.

Rather than eliminating or attacking extremes, we first accept them without distinction. Then, we should walk the path that we believe is the right one, without hesitation.

At the beginning of this talk, I mentioned Ohigan, so I would like to talk about

higan as well.

The other shore is a translation of the Sanskrit word "paramita," which originally meant the state of a perfected Buddha. It is also a word that expresses the path of salvation, originating from the Pure Land philosophy that says, "Let us cross over from this shore, the world we live in, which is riddled with worldly worries and suffering, to the other shore, the paradise where Amida Nyorai resides.

The Ohigan we often use is a Buddhist event called "Higan-E," which is held in Japan during the seven days of the spring and autumn equinoxes, with the middle day on each of these days.

Here is an explanation of the vernal equinox. Imagine the same for the autumnal equinox.

In the Law Concerning National Holidays, "Vernal Equinox Day" was promulgated on July 20, 1948 as a day to praise nature and to appreciate all living creatures. The equinoxes come every year. And we carry our hearts to the other shore.

Matsuo Basho composed the following poem: "Today is the Higan, the day to sow the seeds of bodhi".

We are kept alive by the life of all living creatures that grow in unison with the arrival of spring.

We should not see this Higan Festival as just a holiday to be free from our daily work, but we should know once again that we are born out of the harmony of nature and are kept alive by many living creatures.

We must also thank our ancestors for allowing us to be born into this world as human beings.

The postcard sermon series was given by Rev. Yugen Saito of Hagyu-ji temple . Translation and voice in English by Hirokazu Kosaka.