

# Nichiren Shu News

*Published by the Head Office of Nichiren Shu Buddhism & NOPPA*

No. 196

June 1, 2013

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## Buddhist Reverend in Vegas Weathers the Gamble of his Life



Priests and members in front of new storefront temple



Newly dedicated altar inside Kannonji Temple

*By John M. Glionna,  
Los Angeles Times*

**Douglas Kanai takes on the brutal '100 days' Nichiren ritual of pain and deprivation in Japan to test his inner strength.**

LAS VEGAS — On a warm Sunday afternoon, the Rev. Douglas Kanai wore a serene expression as Buddhist followers surrounded him outside his new storefront temple, sandwiched between a used-car dealer and a tax preparer's office.

But his stories were far from peaceful, and the scene he described was not desert Nevada but faraway Tokyo in the dead of winter. The gambling mecca's roaring city traffic muffled his soft-spoken tales of physical endurance and a profound search for inner willpower that would eventually sustain him.

To prove he possessed the fortitude to lead his own Nichiren temple, Kanai had to endure a test known in Japan as the "100 days." From November to February, the former Las Vegas casino worker and other recruits endured 21-hour days eating only rice gruel, kneeling and chanting for hours. Eventually, Kanai's toes went numb and intolerable currents of pain shot up his legs.

"Each day started at 2:30 a.m. and ended at 11:45 p.m. — there were literally two days packed into each one," he said.

At age 40, his hair is long, his face bearded. He wears an off-white hemp woven robe and awkward wooden sandals. He paused, as if reliving the moment, then added, "But before lights out, you had to rebandage your feet and pray you had the will to go on."

Seven times a day, scores of recruits braved a water purification ritual. Standing naked in the freezing wind and snow, they poured cold water over their heads — officially to cleanse their souls, but realistically to weed out the weak.

One man died during the training, Kanai said, and 10 others "escaped" the temple turned prison, which was set among the bucolic bonsai and cherry trees of suburban Tokyo.

Kanai, born in Salt Lake City and the son of a Buddhist bishop, emerged as the first American-born recruit to complete the ruthless Nichiren ritual, which dates back 700 years in Japan.

On Sunday, during the opening of his new urban prayer space — known as the Nichiren Buddhist Kannon Temple of Nevada — Kanai re-created the water purification ceremony for several dozen followers, sharing his hard-earned spiritual energy and demonstrating his difficult path.

"Only he knows the torture he endured, but it seems worse than any military boot camp," said Kathie Quinn, who drove from Los Angeles for the ceremony. "From what I understand, you need that kind of trauma to see what he saw — the good and the bad of his soul."

Kanai's Japanese-born father, Shokai Kanai, now 71, survived the same 100-day test three times decades ago. He administers a temple across town.

Although the younger Kanai was ordained as a Buddhist reverend after college, he decided to pursue another career. He worked in the import-export trade, and years ago followed his parents to Las Vegas, where he took a job in the casino back offices. Eventually he earned an MBA at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas.

But with his father then in his late 60s, Kanai realized the elder man's loyal followers expected a transition to come from within the Kanai family. To take over his own temple, the young holy man knew he must face the 100 days.

Before the son's departure, the father shared some advice: "You cannot say

no," Shokai Kanai recalled telling him. "Just like in the military, you must say: 'Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.'"

The worst part of the ordeal, Douglas Kanai says, were the long hours spent kneeling, his frame arched back to rest on his feet. Weak from lack of sleep and sustenance, he chanted the Lotus Sutra and wondered whether he would faint from the pain. As he tried to position himself to relieve the agony, his minders criticized him for not chanting loudly enough.

"You had to find a way to ignore the pain," Kanai recalls. "That was the challenge."

Rumors circulated about those who couldn't make it, who either asked their superiors for relief or slipped away when no one was looking. Often, recruits would find their ranks diminished with the new day.

Then came word of the death.

"You have to take a physical before you go in," Kanai says. "There are problems from stress. You know there is a possibility of death, that what you

are about to endure is so challenging that it could kill you."

He remembers the man who didn't make it. "We could all see that he was not well," Kanai recalled. "Finally, they took him away to a hospital."

The recruits learned of his demise when teachers "read a special prayer for the dead and they included his name" on the night he died.

It made Kanai look for signs that his own strength and sanity were ebbing. "I told myself that I would rather come back and fight another day, that I was of no help to anyone if I was dead," he recalled.

Temple leaders tested Kanai, the only American, to see whether they could anger him enough that he would lash out — a lack of discipline they believe is present in most Americans. They hit and insulted him, but Kanai did not retaliate.

Over the days, Kanai came to accept the brutal rhythm of the regimen. But sometimes he weakened. He saw others steal away for catnaps, sneak nibbles of extra food as they cleaned in the temple kitchen. At first, he detested their weakness. Later, he found himself following their lead.

"I asked myself, 'Am I going to Dumpster-dive like the others? What does that say about me?'"

He realized he had failures just like anyone else, he said.

Kanai, who returned to Las Vegas last week, says he can't wait to shave off his beard. On Sunday, he stood before his temple with the satisfied look of a man who has been on a long, arduous ordeal, glad to have returned in one piece.

(LA Times, March 25, 2013)



Ministers performing "suigyo" in the parking lot of Kannonji Temple



The Kanai Family: L-R. Edde and Amber Kanai, Bishop Shokai, Douglas, Randy and Mrs. Kumiko Kanai



Members watching "suigyo"



# The Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin in Kabuki (1)

By Rev. Kanji Tamura  
Associate Professor  
Faculty of Buddhist Studies  
Rissho University

## Introduction

Kabuki is one of the representative art forms of Japan. When we observe a kabuki performance, we find elements of Buddhism scattered about, such that it is possible to see forms of Buddhist culture naturally immersed in the everyday lives of commoners of the Edo Period. In the scripts of kabuki plays, we find instances of specialized terms and exchange of verses that are usually too difficult and demanding for modern-day theatergoers to grasp easily. It is also possible to discern the high level of Buddhist understanding by the playwrights as well as the commoners of the time.

When I attend a stage performance and hear a script rich in Buddhist terms, I often think to myself, "Among those in the audience (the actors included), could it be that only those who do research in Buddhism fully appreciate the deep meanings being conveyed?" Perhaps kabuki is the preeminent form of entertainment that researchers in Buddhism today should be watching.

By the way, it is without saying that the Lotus Sutra remains the most read and most respected by measure of faith among all the Buddhist texts in Japan. Therefore, it is not surprising that many scenes borrowed from the Lotus Sutra are interwoven into kabuki. It is also possible to see many scenes within kabuki works which are related to Nichiren Shonin.

This paper represents my first attempt to extract elements of both the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin from works of kabuki, and then to discuss them.

## The History and Program of Kabuki

The origin of kabuki is thought to be the dance created by Izumo no O-kuni that gained popularity when performed at Kitano Tenman-gu of Kyoto in 1603. There are theories that claim that O-kuni was either a shrine maiden (miko) or lowly laborer (kawara-mono) of Izumo Shrine, but nothing is conclusive. O-kuni, created the dance movements to fit musical numbers that were popular during the time. These were groundbreaking in that they incorporated movements of the kabuki-mono: one who dressed lavishly, and committed acts that deviate from common social norms. It was also remarkable that these were performed by a woman dressed as a man. The kabuki of the time was performed on a Noh stage.

After this, others appeared who copied O-kuni. There were performances such as the Yujo Kabuki played by prostitutes and the Waka-shu Kabuki played by young actors who had not shaved off their facial hair. However, these forms of kabuki were thought to corrupt the morals of ordinary people and were banned in 1629 and 1652 respectively. These forms were replaced by Yaroo Kabuki or kabuki performed by men. This style has been maintained to this day.

Until the Waka-shu Kabuki, the focus was placed on kabuki dances. After the Waka-shu Kabuki, however, while the element of dancing was maintained, the stage script gained importance over the dancing. The primary emphasis shifted to kyogen with subject matter from sources of history and story-telling. This would serve as the origin for our modern-day Kabuki Kyogen. In addition, the evolution of a uniquely kabuki stage construction would begin at this time, departing from stage structures such as the runway (hana-michi), elevatable stage (seri), surrounding stage (mawari-butai), and other features common to the Noh stage.

The Genroku Era (1688-1704) of the Edo Period would see the appearance of great performers such as Tojuro of Western Japan and Danjuro of Eastern Japan. This represented the nascent beginnings of Edo Kabuki. First-generation Sakata Tojuro (1647-1709) of Kyoto introduced the Wagoto Style characterized by its emphasis on finely-detailed nuances of feeling. On the other hand, Edo's first-generation Ichikawa Danjuro (1660-1704) developed the Aragoto Tradition characterized by expressions of bravery. The difference between the artistic concept of "Aragoto of Edo and Wagoto of Kamigata (the upper side referring to where the emperor lives)", still current today, was formed during this era.

From the Genroku Era, dance forms of women would become increasingly popular. By the Kyoho and Horeki Eras (1716-1764), partly with the development of a chorus (nagauta) comprised of several members singing and playing the shamisen to be used increasingly as an accompaniment, the advent of women's movements would be expanded. It is said that the basic form of women's movements had reached its completion with such performance as first-generation Nakamura Tomijiro's "Kyoganoko Musume Dojoji".

During this time, the center of kabuki was based mainly in Kyoto and Osaka. After the Genroku Era, Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725), a puppet theater playwright associated with the Takemoto-za troupe in Osaka, wrote over 100 jyoruri: narrative plays that accompany puppet plays (bunraku), attesting to the great popularity of the jyoruri genre. A trend developed in which jyoruri scripts would be transcribed into kabuki and then performed. This marked the birth of gidayu kyogen. The Bunka Bunsei Period (1804-1829) would see an era of prosperity for Edo Kabuki with the numerous creations of kyogen by fourth generation Tsuruya Namboku (1755-1829).

With Adjutant General Tadakuni Mizuno's campaign to clean up the red-light district of Edo (Tempo no Kaikaku) in 1841 (Tempo 12), the theater houses within the inner city, Nakamura-za, Ichimura-za, and Kawarazaki-za were forced to comply and move to the suburban area of Asakusa the following year. The theatrical district was labeled Saruwaka-cho, literally, the "town of young monkeys". However, with the overthrow of Mizuno, his crusade to effect changes was slowly

abated, allowing Edo Kabuki to enjoy a resurgence of popularity.

The thirty years of the Bakumatsu Era before the fall of the Shogunate Government saw the development of many small theater houses. This is called the "Saruwaka-cho Period". From the Saruwaka-cho Period to the Late Bakumatsu or Early Meiji Period, Kawatake Mokuami (1816-1893) produced more than 350 plays, leading the kabuki world. While kabuki did see a time of ebb and flow during the Meiji Period, it was able to make adjustments to modernize.

The variations of kabuki kyogen can be categorized basically as follows: Jun Kabuki or pure kabuki, meaning programs that were designed to be kabuki kyogen from the beginning; Gidayu Kyogen, meaning programs that blossomed from ningyo jyoruri; Shin Kabuki, post-Meiji, programs in which theater was considered to be produced by independent writers, and Buyo Geki. However, this categorization is not conclusive. For example, there are elements of Noh and Kyogen within Buyo or dancing (Matsubame-mono), where one program may be comprised of several competing art forms.

The content of eclectic performances has two stems. One is Jidai-mono, a work that is either set in the Edo Period or earlier, having actual historical references or one in which an incident involving court nobles, warriors, or priests of the Edo Period are retold in a plot set in the middle ages

or earlier. The other is Sewa-mono, a work that describes the social conditions of the dwellers of Edo.

In addition, kabuki has a classification called Sekai or "the world". This refers to a very large category that subsumes a number of varying indices such as era, place, background, characters, folk stories and legends, or historical circumstances familiar to most everyone. Works such as the "Soga-mono", "Yoshitsune-mono" or "Hogan-mono", "Taiheiki-mono"; "Chushingura-mono" would be categorized under the heading of Sekai, each bearing their own unique parameters. The audience would enjoy the plays in terms of how the scenes were uniquely rendered given the standardized plot sequence within each world.

In our modern day (Heisei Period), while the stewards of kabuki have stubbornly maintained the tradition of their craft, they have thrilled their audiences by venturing into untrod-den genres and developing new works. Today, the total number of theater productions is said to be about 400.

(to be continued)



Kyogen version of Shuron (a polemic)



18 classical pieces of Kabuki

## Rev. Kanno Preaches (24)



**"I keep the Wonderful Dharma.  
It is rare in the world.  
If you practice hard,  
I will expound it to you."  
(Lotus Sutra: Chapter XII, Devadatta)**

### Hard Practice

Sakyamuni Buddha, seeking the Great Dharma, met with a seer called Asita, and was told that the seer would expound the dharma to Sakyamuni Buddha on condition of hard practice.

Becoming the servant of Asita, the Buddha practiced hard. He collected water, gathered firewood, prepared meals for him and so forth, doing practices hardly imaginable for a king of a country. Going through the extremity of life, denying sleep and rest, the Buddha accumulated virtues and attained buddhahood.

Are we, ordinary folks, requested to do the same hard practices? The answer is "No." Then what are we requested to do?

Nichiren Shonin teaches us, "Requested for us is total faith in the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku." "We are requested to have a fully reliant faith."

This can be done, I suppose. If we wish to be protected by the Buddha, we should become fully reliant on the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku, as shown in the above phrases of the sutra.

(Rev. Nisso Kanno, head priest of Kaichoji Temple, Shizuoka Prefecture)



# Is True Word Buddhism an Evil Teaching?

By Rev. Ryuei McCormick

Nichiren claimed that, "True Word (Japanese Shingon) Buddhism is an evil teaching leading to the destruction of our nation." Nichiren saw True Word or Shingon Buddhism as the most insidious threat against the teaching and practice of the Lotus Sutra. In a letter to Lords Toki and Soya he wrote, "The false teachings of Buddhism refer to the false opinions regarding the comparative superiority between the Shingon and Lotus Schools. The reason for my criticism of the Zen and Pure Land Schools is for the purpose of clarifying this point." (p.195, Writings of Nichiren Shonin Doctrine 3) Those of us living outside Japan are probably not familiar with Shingon Buddhism. So in this essay I would like to provide a short explanation.

Shingon or "True Word" is a translation of the Sanskrit word "mantra." It is the practice of the Mantrayana or "mantra path" that uses special incantations as a form of meditative practice whereby one can attain Buddhahood and even worldly goals. This kind of Buddhism is also known as the "esoteric" or "secret teaching" (Japanese



Rev. Ryuei McCormick

texts of Esoteric Buddhism were called sutras, but in time they came to be called tantras. By the 8th century, Esoteric Buddhism in India was called Vajrayana, the Vajra Vehicle. "Vajra" is a Sanskrit term for "diamond" or "thunderbolt" or even "adamantine." Japanese Shingon and Tibetan Vajrayana share the same roots in India but developed along different lines.

Esoteric Buddhism began to develop as early as the second century CE. According to legend, Nagarjuna (150-250) unlocked an iron tower and received the transmission of tantric texts such as the Mahavairochana Sutra and the Diamond Peak Sutra. Scholar-monks from India introduced these and other esoteric teachings to China in the 8th century. These teachings were transmit-

mikkyo). Esoteric Buddhism presents itself as a quicker and more efficient path to Buddhahood than the presumably slower path of cultivating the six perfections of a Bodhisattva. Originally, the ritual

led to the Japanese monk Kukai (774-835; aka Kobo Daishi) who founded the Shingon school in Japan. They were also brought to Japan by Saicho (767-822; aka Dengyo Daishi), the founder of the Tendai school. Saicho, however, considered the esoteric teachings less important than the Lotus Sutra. However Kukai and even more recent Tendai patriarchs believed that while the Lotus Sutra and esoteric sutras were equal in principle, the latter were superior in terms of the efficacy of the esoteric practices they revealed.

Essentially, Shingon Buddhism proposes that Mahavairochana Buddha, a personification of the Dharma-kaya or reality-body Buddha, communicates awakening to all beings so they can quickly attain Buddhahood. This is accomplished by identifying with the Three Mysteries of the physical, verbal, and mental activity of Mahavairochana Buddha by using mudras, mantras, and mandalas. Mudras are "seals" or hand signs that correspond to Mahavairochana Buddha's actions. Mantras correspond to Mahavairochana Buddha's words. Mandalas are diagrammatic images that correspond to Mahavairochana Buddha's mind or

internal awakening.

Nichiren objected to the suborning of the Lotus Sutra to Shingon. He believed that the Lotus Sutra and esoteric teachings were not equal in principle, because only the former taught the One Vehicle guaranteeing Buddhahood for all beings. Also, the Eternal Shakyamuni Buddha of Chapter 16 is not merely the universal reality-body like Mahavairochana but also embodies the transformation and enjoyment bodies of Buddhahood. In other words the Buddha of Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra embodies the historical, ideal, and universal aspects of Buddhahood and so is a more complete representation of Buddhahood than Mahavairochana. Nichiren taught that the Lotus Sutra was more profound by far than Shingon or Esoteric Buddhism and that all people could directly practice it without undergoing esoteric initiations or taking up complex and expensive rituals. All it takes to attain Buddhahood in one's very body is to put one's hands in gassho, gaze upon the Omandala Gohonzon, and invoke the Odaimoku: Namu Myoho Renge Kyo. (to be continued)

## Cambodia Study Tour



Group members inspecting Angkor Wat

By Rev. Zenjo Nibe  
Missionary Dept., Shumuin

Nichiren Shu held the 9th "Nichiren Shu Study Tour" in Siem Reap Cambodia from February 14 to 23 of 2013. Ground support was provided by the TMRC Non Profit Organization Japan staff (Represented by Rev. Bunko Ono, Myo Ho Kessha, Gumma Prefecture) led by Rev. Kairyu Shimizu (Toei-ji Temple, Chiba), co-led by Junchi Fujii (Honryu-ji Temple, Kyoto) along with a thirteen member volunteer group ranging in age from 18 to 34. The study tour is an ongoing effort of Nichiren Shu to promote international volunteer efforts and help raise the next generation of missionary talent. These tours were previously held in Laos, India, and Sri Lanka.

The focus of this year's study tour was repairing the Kurada Elementary School in Siem Reap. Cambodia has an extremely humid tropical climate and has heavy rain during the monsoon season from May to November. The average year round temperature is over 30°C (86°F). The school walls were heavily damaged by the elements and needed repair. In addition to the repair, another tour objective was to build a 'recycle wall' from recycled PET plastic bottles to improve the rest-room facilities. The goal of the recycle wall came from last year's Cambodia

study tour that made members aware of the waste problems there.

On February 24 the group set out from Narita Airport full of hope. After a transfer and layover at Incheon International Airport, we arrived in Siem Reap seven hours later. The temperature was a blistering 30°C, far different than Japan. Everybody felt extremely hot from the sudden change. We took a bus from the airport to the hotel in the city. The population of Siem Reap is 170,000 and the city continues to see economic growth from Angkor Wat tourism. The city center is developed and very different from the image of Cambodia many Japanese have. Outside of the city however, rice paddies stretch in all directions. Therein lays Angkor Wat.

The first order of business was learning the history of Angkor Wat and Cambodia. We received a lecture from Professor Satoru Miwa, group leader of the Sophia University Angkor International Mission. We learned about the archaeology and preservation of Angkor Wat and the delicate balance between preservation and the growing tourism pressures from Siem Reap. We also learned about the efforts to educate Cambodians to carry on this preservation work through future generations. Many talented Cambodians were lost during the Khmer Rouge regime. It has taken collective archaeological talent from many countries to help replace what was lost.

In a very short time we toured the temples of Angkor Wat, Ta Prohm, Angkor Thom, and surrounding areas. The members of our group were surprised by the highly detailed workmanship. It was miraculous for us to experience in the present day the

craftsmanship from over a thousand years ago. We owe gratitude to the generations of Cambodians who helped preserve the temples despite man-made and natural disasters. As we assisted the archeological work during our study tour, we could not help but feel we are also helping in the great effort to pass the legacy of Angkor to future generations.

More than half of the study tour schedule was devoted to repairing Kurata Elementary School which is located in a rural area of Siem Reap. The school was built with funds provided by Mr. Kurata decades ago, and is currently managed by funds provided by the Spitler School Foundation NGO. The first order of business for our group was repairing the facility. First we sandpapered the walls to remove dirt, then we applied three coats of paint with paint rollers attached to three meter long bamboo poles. At the same time the group built a 'recycle wall' using filled PET bottles, the finished walls measured 190 cm tall by 450 cm wide and 150 cm by 270 cm, and utilized 1200 PET bottles.

Ten days may seem like a long time but it passed quickly. Every day was packed with activities. We accomplished everything that we intended to do. Despite the unfamiliar heat nobody got sick and we kept at our work. We all made it back home safe and sound.

This was due to the help of many people. This year we again received support from Spitler School Foundation NGO staff member Chea Sarin, who helped us last year. Mr. Sarin is also a partner with TMRC. In addition, we received support from guides, drivers, hotel staff, and the teachers of Kurata Elementary School. We deeply thank them for all of their assistance.

In the midst of a busy schedule, it was the smiles of the local school children

that kept our spirits up. We hope that they can learn many things at their refurbished school. During the break time we played games with the children: soccer, tug of war, and origami. We were moved by their lively spirit. The school children in Cambodia might not have the material wealth of Japanese children but their bright eyes reminded us that material wealth is not everything.

We sincerely hope the accomplishments of this study tour, a clean and repaired school building, help them achieve their greatest potential. (Tr. K. Bassett)



Painting the school walls



The local children



The recycle wall made from PET bottles



# Temple Events

## Aragyo Priests Visit Southeast Asia Temples

By Rev. Kangyo Noda



Rev. Noda with ministers who completed the Aragyo and members of the Malaysian temples

From March 27 until April 1 of this year, a delegation of Aragyo Priests toured temples in Southeast Asia. The group included Rev. Hokken Woo and Rev. Myokei Min from Korea. It also included Rev. Eijun Hayashi, Rev. Shinjin Kodama, Rev. Esho Torii, Rev. Gyokei Umada, Rev. Renkei Suzuki, and Rev. Tsuuh Nakai from Japan. They had all completed their Dai Aragyo 100-day training this February. After their Kizanshiki ceremonies at their home temples to celebrate their return, they traveled to Southeast Asia. Although they had not fully recovered their strength from the serious training, they were determined to help propagate the Dharma and encourage the members of Nichiren Shu to develop their faith and practice.

Their first stop was Jakarta, Indonesia on March 27. Jakarta Rengeji Temple recently moved to a new site in West Jakarta. This was the first time for the Jakarta temple to welcome so many Aragyo priests for a special service. Twenty members joined the service and received a special blessing. These members came not only from Jakarta, but also from Central Java.

The following day, they flew to Singapore. Sixty Singaporean members attended the special blessing service. Some of the members there were delighted to meet Rev. Woo and Rev. Min again since they had all attended the 10th anniversary of the Penang, Malaysia Temple held in February of 2012. The

Singaporean members were also pleased that Rev. Woo had come and brought so many of his fellow Aragyo priests to the Singapore temple.

On March 29, the group headed to Klang, Malaysia. The Klang Temple had unveiled their new temple signboard just one week earlier when the local government approved the temple as a religious organization. Forty members attended the service. All the members were happy that many Aragyo priests had come to their temple to celebrate this occasion of the authorization of the temple by the government and the display of the new signboard. It was a new step forward for spreading the Dharma in the region of Klang.

The next morning, members of the Kuala Lumpur temple came to Klang to escort the visiting priests to their temple. It is a 45-minute drive to this capital city of Malaysia. The temple in Kuala Lumpur opened in September of 2012. Forty members gathered to enjoy the special blessing ceremony. Members warmly welcomed them singing Buddhist songs.

After lunch at Kuala Lumpur temple, the group went quickly to the airport, and took a flight to Penang, Malaysia. For Rev. Woo and Rev. Min, it was their second visit to the Penang temple. In 2012, the Penang temple had invited them for its 10th year celebration. The wonderful hospitality they had received then convinced them to return to this island once more. More than 150

members took part in the Kito blessing service on the evening of March 30. Since the main hall of Ichinenji Temple could not accommodate everyone, chairs were set up outside. Everyone had a great experience during the evening Kito service.

All the members of Southeast Asian temples felt deep gratitude towards Rev. Woo and all the ministers who visited their temples. Everyone felt the compassionate blessing from the protective deities of the Dharma. This great and pure experience will surely help all the members' faith and practice and the propagation of the Lotus Sutra in Southeast Asia.



Group Picture at the Jakarta Temple

## Florida Sangha

By Rev. Shinkyō Warner



Rev. Shinkyō Warner making a presentation

On Saturday, March 23, Rev. Shinkyō Warner participated in Tampa, Florida's semi-annual "Change Your Mind Day". This spring over 35 people from various branches of Buddhism gathered on a cool morning to learn more about each other's traditions and discuss how to work together to bring the Buddha's teachings to this large metropolitan area. As Rev. Warner led the group in Shodaigyo meditation, the sounds of the Odaimoku could be heard throughout the park in which they met. Even the hawks and gulls flying overhead seemed to join in the group efforts to lead all beings to enlightenment. Rev. Warner received several invitations from other groups to lead meditation sessions for them and speak about the Wonderful Dharma of the Lotus Sutra. He intends to use these

contacts to continue to grow a Sangha in Tampa, Florida.

## Toronto Nichiren Buddhist Temple

By Mr. Hiroshi Yamamoto  
Message from a Member

Cold and snowy weather had continued throughout the beginning of April, but the long-awaited spring is finally approaching! Spring brings a refreshing feeling both inside and outside me. It is also the time of the year when flowers bloom and convey a sense of youthfulness. As it gets warmer outside, it also allows us to take a walk in the park or be under the sun that gives us energy.

Within our lives, there are certain things that we cannot prevent from occurring, such as natural disasters. In Buddhism, it is said that there are four inevitable things in human life: birth, sickness, aging and death. Life does not always work out the way we want it to. We tend to worry about life after death and I still do not know if heaven or hell exists. However, I believe it is best to worry about my after-life once I reach the other world.

Nichiren Shonin explained that both hell and heaven are within us. Either in this world or another, wherever there is suffering, that place becomes hell to those who suffer and wherever there is pleasure, that place becomes heaven to those who enjoy their life. Depending on the way we think or feel, we can create hell or heaven in the world we live in. It is difficult to change the world on our own, but with support from others, we are capable of making the world we live in a better place.

Nichiren Shonin has taught us the teachings of the Buddha and that we can cleanse the world and endure suffering by chanting "Namu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo." We shall practice and abide by this precept and apply it in our daily lives.

## Third Annual Seminar for NONA Board Members

By Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett

The third annual seminar for NONA Sangha Board members was held at the NBIC in Hayward on March 1-3, 2013. It was conducted by Rev. Shogen Kumakura, Neil Faulconer, and Rev. Myokei Caine-Barrett. This was the second seminar focused on diversity and is required for all board members to conform to NONA nondiscrimination requirements.

Racism and prejudice are often viewed as unmanageable issues which everyone chooses to ignore. They are difficult topics to address because few really understand exactly what these terms mean in the 21st century and how they might apply to one's worldview or way of life.

Buddhist communities in the West are predominantly Asian in origin or white. This is not entirely the case within NONA since the Lotus Sutra specifically addresses the equality of all beings. We have a broader diversity of ethnic groups. Yet, hearts and minds are often difficult to change and no one is exempt from the social conditioning inherent in all cultures and societies. To create welcoming congregations, NONA has developed a diversity program to raise the consciousness, compassion and capability of its sanghas throughout the United States.

As NONA transitions from a sangha with a narrow ethnicity to one that embraces converts of all ethnicities, tensions and conflict are not unusual. This seminar provides members with the tools and the understanding to manage diversity and constructively address any conflicts which may arise. The training and process work is firmly grounded in the Lotus Sutra and the teachings of Nichiren Shonin. We hope that in the future, such seminars can be brought to each temple and made available for all sangha members.



NONA Board members meeting at NBIC, Hayward

## Calendar for June - July 2013

**June 1:** Minobusan Founder's Hall, change of the Founder's robes

**June 12-14:** The 10th World Missionary Conference

**June 15-17:** Minobusan Kaibyaku-e, commemorating the day when Nichiren Shonin entered Minobusan (May 15, 1274)

**June 25:** Memorial for Nitcho Shonin

**July 13-15:** Obon

By Rev. Kaikei Ochiai

## Nichiren Shu News

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