

Nichiren Shu News

Published by the Head Office of Nichiren Shu Buddhism & NOPPA

No. 237

April 1, 2020

1

Rev. Woo Beop-Hyoen Completes His Fifth Dai-Aragyo

By Rev. Kosei Uchida



Priests give a mass Kito Blessing to crowds of family and devotees upon their successful completion of the 100-day Dai-Aragyo ascetic training.



Rev Woo Beop-Hyoen (left) helps in leading the mass Kito Blessing at Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple after his fifth round of Dai-Aragyo training.

Shingon Shu practice generally includes fire. A piece of wood called *gomagi* on which sutra phrases or our wishes are written is thrown into a sacred fire and burned to pray for wishes to come true or to purify ourselves. Water is also used for religious practices in the world. Notable examples are Baptism in Christianity and ablution in Hinduism. Water is indispensable for all living beings. Ancient civilizations flourished by making use of the benefits of rivers such as the Nile River, Tigris River and Yellow River. Historically water has been highly esteemed.

Water has an essential role in Nichiren Shu practice. Water purification practice is one of the main ascetic practices in Nichiren Shu Dai-Aragyo, the great ascetic practice. It is held each winter at Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple in Chiba Prefecture from November 1 to February 10. Priests entering the Dai-Aragyo-do, the hall where Dai-Aragyo is held, will

experience water purification practice seven times a day. Water is believed to take on a mysterious power, purifying our defiled bodies and minds. You keep pouring water on yourself and reciting the Lotus Sutra as loudly as you can, offering prayers to the Venerable Deity Hariti. Hunger, lack of sleep, pain in your legs from sitting straight in seiza, and a hoarse voice caused by endless sutra-chanting induce you into a state of spiritual darkness full of illusion. You want to give up and run away. But you must overcome delusion in order to develop your strong spirit and patience, to strengthen your faith, and to realize how many people support you.

Those who have completed the 100-day ascetic practice and received instructions for conducting special blessings are called *shuhosshi*. Rev. Woo Beop-Hyoen, born in Korea, completed Dai-Aragyo for the fifth time this year. He made a touching comment on his fifth completion, “I

entered the Dai-Aragyo for the first time in 1999. In retrospect, when I came to Japan to study at Rissho University, I entered the Nichiren Shu dormitory. Although I did not understand enough of the Japanese language, my friends always helped me learn the language as well as the way of reading the Lotus Sutra, the Nichiren Shu doctrines, and the standard of ceremonies and protocols. It is extremely difficult to describe how severe the 100-day ascetic practice is. Nevertheless, I accomplished the 500 days completion of Dai-Aragyo, not because of my own effort, but because my comrades who shared the lofty aspiration toward the ascetic practice gave great support to me. Our Founder Nichiren Shonin said, ‘Those who aspire to learn Buddhism should always feel grateful for the favors they receive and repay them.’ With these words inscribed indelibly on my mind, I will not forget to have a debt of gratitude to the Buddha, our Founder,

the Venerable Deity Hariti, and my great supporters and friends who encouraged me to keep my practice. From now on, as head priest of Hodoji Temple, I will strive to save those who suffer mentally and physically and lead them into a tranquil state through the Lotus Sutra and Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.”

One of his followers from Hodoji Temple who came to see him come out of the Dai-Aragyo-do at 6 a.m. on February 10th at the Hokekyoji Temple remarked with ineffable emotions: “I am greatly honored that he completed the 500-days ascetic practice. It means a lot to us that he has polished our deep karma and removed the rust to bring us back to life. I am proud to be among his followers at Hodoji Temple. We are all happy to be supporters of Hodoji Temple. We are always disciples of Nichiren Shonin, endeavoring to devote ourselves to deepen faith in his teachings.”

—Translated by Rev. Sensho Komukai



Procession out of the Dai-Aragyo Gate and around the compound of Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple.



Priests perform a Kito Blessing and water purification ritual at their home temple to celebrate their completion of the 100-day Dai-Aragyo ascetic training.



Temple devotees from South Korea came to congratulate Rev. Woo Beop-Hyoen.

Protective Deities in Nichiren Shu (1) — Mother-of-Devils or Hariti

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

Mother-of-Devils, also known as Hariti, was a *yaksa*, a female demon, who had 1,000 children. She often came to the town of Rajagṛha in India to take human children away and eat them so that she could obtain enough sustenance to raise her 1,000 children. People in the town were so afraid of Hariti that they asked Shakyamuni Buddha to help with the trouble she caused. Understanding the grief of the parents who lost their children, the Buddha hid the youngest daughter of Hariti. Going half insane, she searched everywhere in the world for her lovely daughter but was not able to find her. She came to the Buddha and asked him where her daughter had gone.

The Buddha replied to Hariti, “You have 1,000 children, but you are quite depressed just because you lost only one child. Can you imagine how sad and painful human parents feel when

they are mourning their lost children?” Hariti finally realized her wrongdoings. She reflected on her evil conduct in the past and felt so guilty that she decided to become a disciple of the Buddha, vowing that she would keep the Buddha-Dharma and protect human children. This was the moment that an evil deity became a benevolent one.

As the story shows, Hariti has generally been revered as a protective deity who helps women in pregnancy, to have a smooth delivery, and for the good care of children. Her figure shows a celestial maiden with a child in her arms and an auspicious fruit in her right hand. The fruit represents protection from harm.

Hariti appears in the Lotus Sutra, especially in Chapter 26, “Dharanis.” The chapter says, “Mother-of-Devils, Hariti, and the ten *raksasis* said simultaneously, ‘We will protect those who read, recite and keep the Lotus Sutra so that they may have no trouble.’

The Buddha praised them, saying, ‘Your merits will be immeasurable when you protect those who keep the Lotus Sutra. You should protect the teacher of the Dharma!’” Nichiren Shonin placed high importance on this. He said with conviction, “I realize that Hariti and the ten *raksasis* are bound to keep guard over those who uphold the sacred title of the Lotus Sutra.” As he faced hardships, he more often tried to defend himself from external enemies by praying for the divine power of Hariti. It is no wonder, therefore, that Hariti appears in the Great Mandala made by Nichiren Shonin.

Because of this important history, Hariti is revered as a protective deity in many Nichiren Shu temples. Special *kito* blessing rituals are conducted in front of her statue. You find that some Hariti images look black with anger with her palms together rather than as a celestial maiden holding a child.

This is because Hariti in the Lotus Sutra chastises enemies who slander the Dharma.

The statue of Hariti in Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple in Chiba is said to have been carved by Nichiren Shonin. At the raid in Komatsubara in 1264, he barely escaped death because Hariti protected him and saved his life. After the Komatsubara Persecution, he stayed in Hokekyoji Temple for a while, where he carved the statue of Hariti as a sign of his gratitude.

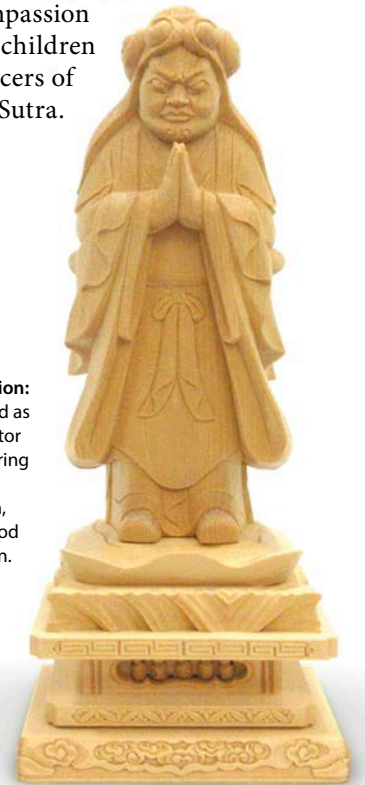
Hariti has been revered as a wonder-working deity for pregnancy, easy delivery and child rearing as well as recovery from illness or injuries and preventing disasters. As a Nichiren Shu follower, it is important to remember that Hariti is a protective deity who vows out of her compassion to protect children and practitioners of the Lotus Sutra.



Hariti holds a child with compassion. Hariti is also known as Kishimonjin in Japanese.



Hariti Hall in Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple, the special paper ceiling decorations mark the sacred protected area where Hariti is enshrined.



Fierce Protection: Hariti is revered as a fierce protector for women during pregnancy, for easy childbirth, and for the good care of children.

EYE-OPENING RITUAL

By Rev. Sensho Komukai

Have you ever seen a daruma doll? It is a round, red-painted doll in the shape of Bodhidharma. A daruma doll is widely popular as a good-luck charm symbolizing winning against adversity. When you have something to wish for, you buy a daruma doll and paint in the pupil in one eye. When your wish comes true, you paint in the pupil of the second eye on the doll. This completes the eyes-opening ritual for the daruma.

The case of Buddhist images or pictures is another story. When you buy or receive any Buddhist image, statue or

picture, you are requested to open the eyes of the Buddha. As the old proverb says, “Plowing the field, and forgetting the seed,” it does no good to make a Buddha and not put in a soul. You will do well to hold an eye-opening ceremony to put the sacred spirit into the image, statue or picture.

Our Founder Nichiren Shonin referred to “opening the eyes” of Buddhist statues. According to him, the Lotus Sutra is the eyes of the various Buddhas in all the worlds throughout the universe. Especially those who uphold the Lotus Sutra are naturally able to acquire five kinds of eyes: (1) human-eyes, (2) divine-eyes, (3) wisdom-eyes, (4) dharma-eyes, and (5) Buddha-eyes.

Great importance is attached to the eye-opening ritual in Nichiren Shu, but to get the five kinds of eyes is not enough. Nichiren Shonin said in his writing called *Opening the Eyes of Buddhist Images, Wooden Statues or Portraits*, “The Buddha possesses 32 marks of physical excellence. Of the 32 marks, 31 are visible, beginning with the lowest, the thousand-spoke wheel on the sole of each foot, up to the unseen crown on his head. They can be depicted in pictures or statues. However, the remaining one mark, the pure and immaculate voice of

the Buddha, is invisible. Therefore, his voice cannot be depicted in pictures or statues. Lacking just this one mark, these images of the Buddha cannot claim to be the Buddha.” How can it be possible to bring all 32 marks into existence?

Nichiren Shonin answered, “When we respectfully place the Lotus Sutra in front of a wooden or painted image of the Buddha equipped with 31 marks of physical excellence, the image itself becomes the living Buddha.” Why? It is because the written words of the Lotus Sutra reveal the true intent of the Buddha. Beyond that, when we read and recite the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha’s pure and immaculate voice is expressed in a visible and tangible form. The last missing mark is finally activated. Through our voice reciting the sutra, the Buddha’s voice will be infused into the statues and pictures. Therefore, Nichiren Shonin asserted, “Those who read the Lotus Sutra should not regard it as consisting of merely written words. The words of the Lotus Sutra contain the very spirit of the Buddha.” The eye-opening ritual is not completed without the Lotus Sutra.

No matter how excellent works of art the Buddha’s images or pictures may be, they cannot become the living Buddha,



because the pure and immaculate voice is missing. Only when we take the Lotus Sutra as his true intent, and then place and read it before the statues or pictures can they become the perfect Buddha equipped with all 32 marks of physical excellence.



Founding Day Celebration and One Thousand Chanting Service

By Rev. Chishin Hirai, Head Minister, Ankokuronji Temple

FOUNDING DAY CELEBRATION (RIKKYO KAISHU-E)

We say that Nichiren Shu was founded on April 28, 1253. After a long period of study and practice in Kyoto and other places, Nichiren Shonin returned to Seichoji Temple where he was ordained. He chanted the Odaimoku, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*, for the first time facing the rising sun on the summit of Asahigamori. That day has been designated as the Founding Day of Nichiren Shu.

He did not intend to found a new Buddhist school. What he did was to chant the Odaimoku to proclaim his devotion to initiate the propagation of the teaching of the Lotus Sutra to as many people as possible. The result of this was the establishment of Nichiren Shu. This year, 2020, marks the 768th Anniversary of the Establishment of Nichiren Shu.

The Lotus Sutra came to Japan a long time before Nichiren Shonin. Everyone understood that the Lotus Sutra was an important teaching and had faith in it, and the sutra had great influence on literature and arts in Japan. However, they didn't recognize that the sutra was the most important and highest teaching of the Buddha. They didn't appreciate the distinctions between the various sutras, so they practiced the Lotus Sutra together with other sutras. On the contrary, Nichiren Shonin said that the Buddha expounded everything about his awakening in the Lotus Sutra. For this reason, it has been recognized as the preeminent sutra in the Tiantai and Nichiren schools of Buddhism. Nichiren Shonin also said that the Odaimoku is the essence of the Lotus Sutra. When we chant the Odaimoku, we will be led to awakening. Nichiren Shonin chanted the Odaimoku by himself and encouraged others to do so. His life of many hardships started from that moment on the summit of Asahigamori. That is why we say that Nichiren Shu was established there at that time. Therefore, all Nichiren Shu temples have special events to celebrate this Founding Day on April 28.

ONE THOUSAND CHANTING SERVICE (SENBU-E)

Have you ever heard the term, 'Senbu-e'? 'Senbu-e' is an abbreviation of 'Hokekyo Senbu Dokuju-e,' literally meaning 'One Thousand Chanting Service.' It refers to the service for chanting the Lotus Sutra one thousand times. In this service, the whole Lotus Sutra, from the first to the



A Sunrise Proclamation: This statue commemorates Nichiren Shonin chanting the Odaimoku, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*, for the first time on the summit of Asahigamori at Seichoji Temple in Kiyosumi.

final twenty-eighth chapter, is recited one thousand times. Since the Lotus Sutra is a long sutra, it takes about eight hours even when chanted at a fast pace. With the inclusion of lunch and other break times, a single recitation occupies an entire day. If a single person tries to chant it a thousand times, it will take one thousand days, almost three years. Therefore, the One Thousand Chanting Service is usually done by one hundred ministers. One hundred ministers chant the sutra every day for ten days. This results in the chanting of the Lotus Sutra one thousand times.

In Japan, there is a record of the first One Thousand Chanting Service being held about 1,300 years ago. There are some temples, such as Minobusan Kuonji, Ikegami Honmonji, Hikigayatsu Myohonji, and Horinouchi Myohoji, that regularly hold the service to this day. They conduct the service in their own way, since it is now hard to keep one hundred ministers for ten days. The variety of ways this service is practiced makes the Nichiren Shu events more colorful and unique.

The purpose of the One Thousand Chanting Service is to offer a prayer at someone's memorial, or for repaying the favor or blessing for others, and for deceased family members. It is also done to offer a prayer for Nichiren Shonin, who devoted his life to propagation, to express our gratitude to him since we can have faith in the Lotus Sutra and chant the Odaimoku because of his efforts. It is also to pray that the teaching of the Lotus Sutra spreads widely so that all people in the world will be happier. That's why

the One Thousand Chanting Service has been held. Needless to say, to chant the sutra itself is great practice for us.

ONE THOUSAND CHANTING SERVICE (IKEGAMI HONMONJI)

Ikegami Honmonji is a very famous temple. It is where Nichiren Shonin passed away. It is where the Oeshiki Service, Nichiren Shonin's memorial service, is held each year on October 13, attended by many worshipers. Ikegami Honmonji has many programs other than Oeshiki. One of them is the One Thousand Chanting Service in April.

Ikegami Honmonji holds the One Thousand Chanting Service April 27-29 each year. During this period, they have two services a day, in the morning and afternoon, wherein they chant the entirety of the Lotus Sutra straight through. Specifically, on the first day, they chant the sutra for the deceased families of all their members in the morning and for the deceased families of their special supporters in the afternoon. On the second day, they chant the sutra for the changing ceremony of Nichiren Shonin's robes in the morning and in celebration of the Establishment of Nichiren Buddhism in the afternoon. On the last day, they chant the sutra for the healthy raising of children in the morning and for world peace in the afternoon.

These are all important services. We should pay more attention to the two services on the second day. The statue of Nichiren Shonin in the Daido at Ikegami Honmonji is the oldest statue of him. Nichiren Shonin's statue is

usually carved with his robes. However his statue at Ikegami Honmonji wears real robes that are changed twice a year. The winter robes are changed to summer robes in the spring and changed back from summer robes to winter robes in the fall. It is truly as though the statue were treated like a living person. We must serve him as though he is alive. People donate robes for him regularly so that a new robe is used for every ceremony. This is a very popular donation among Nichiren Shu members. There is a waiting list to donate robes for him. I also wish to donate robes for him someday. It would be a great honor. I would be pleased and thrilled if he wore the robes I donated. There is also a similar program at Minobusan Kuonji Temple. The Celebration Ceremony of the Establishment of Nichiren Buddhism is not only to celebrate the birthday of Nichiren Buddhism, but also to think of Nichiren Shonin's hardships, to appreciate his teaching and to express the joy of our faith.

I joined the One Thousand Chanting Service at Ikegami Honmonji for the first time last year. I was happy, grateful and moved as I loudly chanted the Lotus Sutra and the Odaimoku with many other ministers. I could really taste the joy of our faith. Last year, I also joined the One Thousand Chanting Service held at Hikigayatsu Myohonji to celebrate the Establishment of Nichiren Shu Buddhism.

ONE THOUSAND CHANTING SERVICE (OTHER TEMPLES)

Many temples announce events on the Internet, including their One Thousand Chanting Services. These are usually open to the public so that anyone can attend. If possible, please join the service. Below is a schedule of the services at major temples in Japan.

- APRIL 5 Katase Ryukoji Temple**
3-13-37 Katase, Fujisawa City, Kanagawa
- APRIL 13 Hikigayatsu Myohonji Temple**
1-15-1 Omachi, Kamakura City, Kanagawa
- APRIL 15-18 Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple**
2-10-1 Nakayama, Ichikawa City, Chiba
- APRIL 27-29 Ikegami Honmonji Temple**
1-1-1 Ikegami, Ota-ku, Tokyo
- MAY 3-5 Minobusan Kuonji Temple**
3567 Minobu, Minobu-cho, Minamikoma-gun, Yamanashi
- MAY 11-13 Horinouchi Myohoji Temple**
3-48-8 Horinouchi, Sugiyama-ku, Tokyo



Archbishop Kanno leads the One Thousand Chanting Service at Ikegami Honmonji Temple in Tokyo.



Power in Numbers: 100 priests reciting the entire Lotus Sutra.

TEMPLE EVENTS

Seattle Enkyoji Nichiren Temple Mamiko Cederman

Fundraisers Mochi Pounding and Shishimai

A *mochi tsuki*, or mochi-pounding party was held at the home of one of our members on December 28. We made five kilograms of *mochi* for offerings for the temple altar and for the altars in our members' homes. Later, we enjoyed a potluck dinner and made *zenzai*, a sweet azuki bean paste with mochi, and *isobe mochi*, mochi wrapped in seaweed.

We hope to hold this mochi-pounding event every other month as a fundraiser for the future of our temple.

We also hold a *Shishimai*, or Lion Dance, every New Years as a fundraiser.



This year we held one on January 4 at the Wing Luke Museum and another on January 26 at the Kawabe House, a Japanese Senior Home. The Shishimai presented a *mikan*, or Japanese tangerine, to each guest and nipped the heads of the guests for good luck throughout the year!

Honolulu Myohoji Temple Daniel Liu, President of the Board

90th Anniversary Coming Up

Honolulu Myohoji Temple will celebrate its 90th Anniversary on Sunday, September 27. This is a milestone for the temple and reflects on our history! The main celebration will take place at the 100 Sails, formerly known as Waikiki Prince Hotel in Waikiki. Having it at this venue will make coordination of logistics much easier for the volunteers from the temple and for the visiting ministers, who won't have to worry about transportation issues.

We will keep you updated on more information about this event.



Penang Ichinenji Temple Rev. Kenin Ito

Celebrating Our Founder's Birthday

The temple celebrated the 799th birthday of Our Founder, Nichiren Shonin on Sunday, February 16. Around 60 members gathered at Ichinenji Temple and took part in the Sunday service. Afterwards, we all celebrated by sharing a birthday cake!

Nichiren Mission of Hawaii Rev. Shokai Kanai

Tokudo Ceremony

On February 16, we held a Tokudo ceremony for member Kalei Kini (63). Kalei has been serving as a member of the temple for more than a decade and decided on his own to receive Tokudo. The

ceremony began with him taking an oath, with his hair closely cropped, wearing a monk's robe.

In this ceremony called Tokudo Shiki, the priest-to-be vows to "keep the precepts as a Nichiren Shu monk and to continue to receive training to become a Nichiren Shu priest." After this pre-Tokudo ceremony, Kalei will have to attend the formal ceremony at Kiyosumi Temple in Chiba prefecture, Japan, the same temple where Nichiren Shonin received his Tokudo. He will then be recognized as an apprentice who is allowed to be trained and eventually become a priest after finishing the 35-day Shingyo Dojo at Minobusan Kuonji Temple. After that, he will then be able to wear the white garment with the black robe in public.

After the ceremony, a special service was held to celebrate the 799th birthday of Our Founder, Nichiren Shonin, who was born in Awa, Kominato, Chiba in 1222.



THE OLDEST HOKKE-DO HALL AT ONSHOJI TEMPLE, INA CITY, NAGANO

Nichiren Shu Shimbun

Onshoji Temple, located in Takato Town of Ina City, Nagano Prefecture, is designated as a Nichiren Shu historic site. This is because the Hokke-do, a hall used for chanting the Lotus Sutra, is recognized as the oldest Hokke-do Hall in Nichiren Shu.

There is a stupa of treasures placed on an altar called *shumidan* in the Hokke-do Hall. Within the stupa, a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha is enshrined and surrounded by the Four Heavenly Kings.

Onshoji Temple was founded in 820 by Grand Master Saicho. Gyogaku-in Nitcho Shonin, who played a leading

role in the revival of Minobusan Kuonji Temple, converted the temple from Tendai Shu to Nichiren Shu in 1473.

Onshoji Temple is situated in the middle of the "Lotus Road" that connects Shinano Province and Kai Province and makes it possible for Nichiren Shu devotees to travel to and from Minobusan Kuonji Temple. The followers in

the Takato area have traditionally kept their own faith in the Lotus Sutra called "Takato Hokke."

Onshoji Temple also has a Shichimen-do, Hall of the Celestial Maiden Shichimen. It was built in the 18th century and is known as the "peony temple," because as many as 2,000 peony flowers bloom in season.



The Stupa of Treasures on the Hokke-do altar.



Onshoji Temple was founded by Grand Master Saicho in 820 and has the oldest Hokke-do.



The peaceful rock garden next to Hokke-do.

Calendar for April 2020–May 2020

APR 8	Hanamatsuri (Buddha's Birthday)
APR 15-18	Nakayama Hokekyoji Senbu-e (1,000 Recitations of the Lotus Sutra)
APR 27-29	Ikegami Honmonji Senbu-e (1,000 Recitations of the Lotus Sutra)
APR 28	768 Rikkyo Kaishu-e (768th Anniversary of the Founding of the Order)

MAY 7	Wesak Day in Southeast Asia (Buddha's Birthday, Enlightenment, and Nirvana Observed)
MAY 12	760 Izu Honan-e (Ceremony commemorating the 760th Anniversary of the Izu Persecution)

Nichiren Shu News c/o The Head Office of Nichiren Shu, 1-32-15 Ikegami, Ota-ku, Tokyo 146-8544, Japan; Tel. +81-3-3751-7181, E-mail: editor-nichirensnunews@nichiren.or.jp
Nichiren Shu News was founded by the Nichiren Shu Overseas Propagation Promotion Association (NOPPA), Nichiyu Mochida, *President*.
 Funding is provided by NOPPA and the Head Office of Nichiren Shu, Hosei Nakagawa, *Chief Administrator*.
Editorial Board Sensho Komukai, *Editor*, Shinkyō Warner, *Assistant Editor*, Kosei Uchida, *Staff Writer*, Sandra Seki, *Advisor*.
Art Director Alan Rowe