

Nichiren Shu News

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(1)

Sakyamuni Buddha and His Supporters

By Prof. Ken-yo Mitomo, Ph. D.

Nichiren Shonin said that the Buddhist Dharma will flourish with sincere disciples from within and support from the followers from the outside.

The Buddha was born at Lumbini on the outskirts of Kapilavastu City. His father, King Suddhodana, was the king of Kapilavastu (present Tilonakot, Nepal) located in central India. Prince Siddhartha left his palace in order to pursue ascetic training as a monk.



Prof. Ken-yo Mitomo

The first problem he faced was how to live on his own. Since his childhood he had been surrounded by servants who catered to him all day. He had nothing to worry about and everything was served to him automatically. But now outside the palace he had to confront reality.

He had to beg for his daily food. He must have been pestered by mosquitoes, horseflies and other insects infesting the area.

In the palace he had worn comfortable sandals but now since he was practicing asceticism, he had to walk around barefooted. The thorns of the wild rose bushes and pebbles on the road must have hurt the soles of his soft feet.

For the Prince, these kinds of things were the first of many obstacles to overcome before entering the priesthood.

Support from "Good Friend"

When the Prince left the palace, his father, King Suddhodana, sent five of his most trusted men to follow his son and go through ascetic practice. This was his paternal love for his son whom he thought was helpless in the outside world. The Buddha was able to attain Enlightenment later with the help and support of these men.

When the Buddha was Enlightened, He gave His first sermon to these supporters. All five of them were loyal and ardent followers so they were also able to attain Enlightenment soon after.

"Anya! Kaudinya! Were you able to attain Enlightenment?" shouted the Buddha. This is said to be the name of one of his five followers.

Later the Buddha told his disciples to proceed with the "good friend." When you cannot find the "good friend," move forward alone like the single horn of a rhinoceros. Beware of the "evil friend," who will get into your way, warned the Buddha.

King Bimbisara, the fifth king of the Saisnaga Dynasty in Magadha, was awed at the majestic dignity of the Buddha and wanted Him to serve

as the leading general of his army. However, the Buddha refused, saying He had not entered the priesthood to gain fame or power. King Bimbisara later became an ardent follower of the Buddha and looked after Him until he was imprisoned by his own son, Ajatasatru, towards the end of his life.

The Shaka clan, from which the Buddha originated, ruled a small kingdom located between the kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha. The Buddha knew that some day this small kingdom would be overtaken by its

neighbors.

Support from a Courtesan

Buddhist groups did not discriminate donations from different classes or gender.

Amrapali was a courtesan and she donated a flower garden named Amrapali Garden to the Buddha. Some people said the donation from a courtesan was impure; however, the Buddha accepted it without prejudice.

"Offerings from anyone should be accepted because it will be a religious merit for them," said the Buddha. He even accepted offerings from the poorest people.

The sermons of the Buddha usually began toward the evening in order to avoid the high temperatures of the day. One evening the followers surrounded Him with oil candles but a sudden gust of wind extinguished all but one of the lights. The candle which remained glowing was the one brought by an old woman. She was so poor that she could only get a little amount of oil, yet even the strongest wind could not extinguish the light of her candle. She had brought the oil candle as an offering to the Buddha and to save the suffering people in the next life.

This proved that even the weakest or the poorest could attain religious prosperity from their strong belief.

Bamboo Forest Monastery

This is the first Buddhist monastery built in Magadha for the Buddha.

Soon after the Buddha attained Enlightenment, a rich man donated the Bamboo Forest Monastery to the Buddha. In India, bamboo forests were very rare so the man who donated it must have been extraordinarily rich or he may have been a king. In those days in India there were men who were as rich as kings, and maybe one of them had donated this monastery.

Buddhist monks went about for alms; however, during the three months of the monsoon, they had to live in caves, tree stumps or stay with relatives. Donations were also wel-

The stone sculpture excavated in Gandhara, Pakistan showing the Buddha accepting the offering of "mud" from a child just outside the Venwana Vihara. The child was playing house when he met the Buddha who was on the way for alms begging. The legend says the child was reborn into King Asoka. The sculpture, 32cm by 37cm by 9cm, dating back to 2 to 3 A.D., is preserved at Peshawar Museum. The photo is taken by Hiroki Fujita



come, but there were some who felt that a priest should live outdoors and not within a house. The Buddha did not say which was better, living outdoors or indoors, but he said the main purpose for these priests was the need to attain Enlightenment.

Jeta Grove Monastery

This monastery was donated to the Buddha by two people: Prince Jeta of Sravasti, son of King Prasena-jit, and Sudatta, a wealthy man who went about giving food to the poor. Sudatta had been looking for a sanitary, peaceful monastery for the monks. He found the Jeta Gardens of Anathapindala and asked Prince Jeta whether the garden could be donated for the Buddha and his disciples.

Prince Jeta, however, was fond of this garden, too, and refused to give it at first but since Sudatta was so persistent, he gave some conditions: Sudatta had to lay out a lot of gold to purchase the garden. This he did and Jeta was astonished at Sudatta's earnest. If it was for such a good purpose, Jeta decided, he would also like to contribute to it. Thus both Sudatta and Jeta contributed to the Jeta Grove Monastery for the Buddha and His disciples.

The Buddha seemed to have liked this Jeta Grove Monastery and frequently stayed there and preached. This place appears quite often in the Buddhist sutras as a place for sermons.

Bathing Robes Donated by a Rich Woman

Once there was a rich woman who wanted to invite the Buddha and His group for a meal. She asked her servant to go and invite them to her house. It was during a sudden rainfall and the Buddha and His followers were bathing naked in the rain. On seeing this, the servant was astonished and rushed back to her mistress to tell her that the group was not a holy one but a bunch of vulgar naked men and women bathing in the rain.

When the wealthy woman heard this, she knew who these people were and sent them bathing robes right

away. From this day on, the Buddha told His followers to wear these bathing robes when taking a bath.

A priest's possession consists of three robes and an alms bowl. The three robes cover the body and the alms bowl is used for their daily food. This is why they had to bathe naked, but from this day on they didn't have to be embarrassed anymore, thanks to the understanding supporters from the outside. Buddhist precepts were decided on from time to time as necessity arose except fundamental rules.

The Buddha at first did not fully understand the lifestyle of ordinary people. So He used to go for alms even during the monsoon season. Many people did not agree with this. After some people donated monasteries, Buddhist monks remained within the monastery. In this way the warm advice of Buddhist supporters contributed in spreading Buddhism.

King Asoka, Supporter After the Buddha's Death

Do you know that there is a lion on the pillar hoisting the Indian flag? This originated from King Asoka.

While trying to unify India, many lives had been lost and the king found that unifying with arms was not right. He decided to unify the country with a set of laws. Not only did King Asoka help Buddhists but he also helped other religious groups.

He set up hospitals for animals, planted fruit trees along the roads and set up lion pillars all over India with Buddhist sutras inscribed on them.

In the Buddhist scriptures it is said that in his previous life, King Asoka was a young boy who presented the Buddha with cakes made out of mud. The Buddha smiled and received them gratefully. "Why did you receive these cakes that are not edible?" asked one of His disciples. The Buddha answered that the feeling of giving is the most important thing. The Buddha also foretold that in his next life, the boy would become a great king who would unite India. Later King Asoka appears in Buddhist scriptures as an important supporter. (tr. ss)

The Doctrine of Ichinen Sanzen (7)

The Actual Three Thousand Existences Contained in One Thought Doctrine of the Essential Section of the Lotus Sutra

By Rev. Kanji Tamura

San-Seken: The Three Factors of Existences (2)

The T'ien-t'ai doctrine of "ichinen-sanzen" is the premise of "hommon ji ichinen-sanzen (the actual 3,000 existences contained in one thought doctrine of the Essential Section of the Lotus Sutra)" revealed later by Nichiren Shonin. "Ichinen-sanzen" means that the whole existing worlds are completely included in our transient minds changing moment by moment. Its content can be divided into three: "jikai-goku (the mutual possession of the ten realms)," "ju-nyoze (the ten aspects)," and "san-seken (the three factors of existences)."

Three factors of existences are: "each living being," "body and mind as the entity of living beings," and "the environmental world that surrounds living beings." When this "three factors" is combined with "the mutual possession of the ten realms" and "the ten aspects," what is formulated is "ichinen-sanzen," which reveals that the momentary movement of our minds is not only connected with the movement of the body and mind of all living beings but also it permeates through the whole environmental world that surrounds our existences.

"The environmental world" refers



Rev. Kanji Tamura

to all environments that surround all living beings, including all natural surroundings such as mountains, rivers and plants and artificial structures such as buildings and roads. We could say that our characters or minds are dependent on surroundings, and when the environments are appropriate, our minds become healthy, and vice versa. Meanwhile, in order for a thing to exist in this world, the place and space (the environmental world) is needed. For example, in order to hold a pencil, there has to be a space for it. Without the space for the pencil, it cannot be there. Moreover, we are not living alone. We live in relation to various environments such as family, work or local area. In this respect, it can be said that the whole environments that sustain our existence are a part of our integral body. We are influenced by environments around us and at the same time are influencing them. Our environments can be changed according to our will and the actions derived from it. From this perspective, the concept and actions of "Spreading Peace throughout the Country by Establishing the True Dharma (rissho-ankoku)" of Nichiren Shonin begins.

"The temporary combination of the Five Elements of body and mind" is the very essence of our existence (each living being), and the place and

space where our integer is located is "the environmental world." These three factors cannot be divided because they are interdependent.

The above is a brief description of *ichinen-sanzen* consisting of "the mutual possession of the Ten Realms," "the Ten Aspects," and "the Three Factors of Existences."

Theoretical Section and Essential Section

The contents of the Lotus Sutra, indicating *ichinen-sanzen*, are divided into two halves. The first half is called the Theoretical Section (*shakumon*), and the latter the Essential Section (*hommon*). The Theoretical Section expounds that all living beings are saved from suffering under the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. In the Essential Section, it is revealed that Sakyamuni Buddha, who is to save all the lives as the Lord of the Dharma, eternally exists in this Saha World, watching and guiding us as the absolute being. Nichiren Shonin said that T'ien-t'ai aimed at the theoretical *ichinen-sanzen* of the Theoretical Section, but Nichiren practiced the actual *ichinen-sanzen* of the Essential Section. This stance shows Nichiren's will to carry out the eternal salvation of Sakyamuni Buddha and to guide the people suffering from the real and turbulent world.

As a matter of fact, T'ien-t'ai frequently focused on the Theoretical Section when he interpreted the Lotus

Sutra. He emphasized that the Essential Section was a lot deeper but he actually spent more words for the Theoretical Section. The core of the Theoretical Section is Chapter II: Expedients. In this chapter, "the Ten Aspects" is revealed as the state approachable only by Buddhas. It can be said that T'ien-t'ai tried to realize such a high state of "the Ten aspects" as well as "*ichinen-sanzen*" according to the observational practice (on one's mind) through exhaustive self-control and training. In other words, it was such a sincere quest to relive the state of the enlightenment reached by Sakyamuni Buddha based on the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

On the other hand, the heart of the Essential Section is Chapter XVI: The Life Span of the Buddha. While the eternal salvation by Sakyamuni Buddha is preached in this chapter, the importance of the Lotus Sutra is emphatically likened to the "good medicine" saved for living beings by the Buddha. This medicine must be the concentration of the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha. The Lotus Sutra also mentions the "messengers" who bring this "good medicine" to all living beings on behalf of the Buddha. Nichiren Shonin regarded the heart of the Lotus Sutra, *ichinen-sanzen*, as this concentrated "good medicine," and recognized his mission to be a "messenger," who was to deliver that "good medicine" to all living beings. That was why, instead of engaging in self-training practice like T'ien-t'ai, Nichiren Shonin stood on the principle of Chapter XVI for the salvation of all living beings and discovered the essence of *ichinen-sanzen* in the Sacred Title of the Daimoku; the Five Sino-Japanese Letters of the Wonderful Dharma. (to be continued)

(translated by Rev. Kanshin Mochida)

The Legend of Nichiren (14)

By Rev. Gyokai Sekido, Ph. D.

Yuigahama

When Nichiren Shonin's hermitage in Kamakura was attacked and burnt down by a mob (on August 28, 1253, lunar calendar), Nichiren escaped to a cave on a nearby hill. He stayed there for three days, feeding himself on nuts and wild strawberries brought by monkeys. There now stands the Hosshoji Temple of "monkey field."



Rev. Gyokai Sekido

The rumor spread that Nichiren Shonin was dead. Toki Jonin (1216-1299), one of his devout followers, successfully found him alive and invited him to his mansion in the present Ichikawa City, Chiba Prefecture. After staying there for some time, Nichiren Shonin returned to Kamakura and resumed propagation activities.

The number of his followers increased rapidly. Crisis conscious, the priests of other sects slandered Nichiren to the shogunate. In those days, the administrative chief of the Kamakura shogunate was Regent Hojo Nagatoki, whose father, Shigetoki, was an eager believer of Amitabha Buddha. Taking into consideration the faith of his father, Regent Nagatoki

arrested Nichiren and exiled him to Izu, on May 12, 1261.

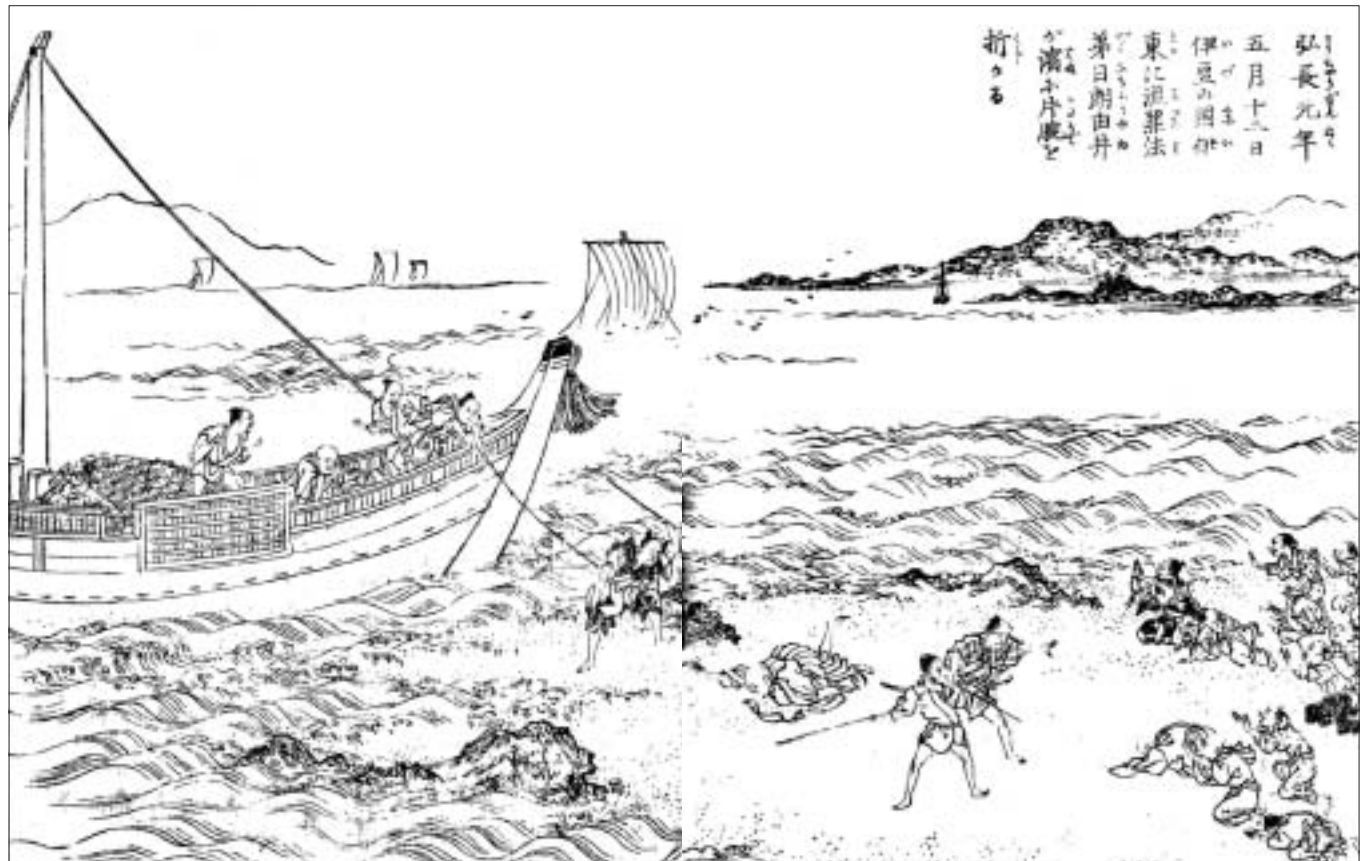
Many disciples and followers gathered on the Yuigahama Beach of Kamakura where the boat with Nichiren aboard was to set sail. Nichiro (1245-1320), a young disci-

ple of Nichiren, who was 16, clung to the mooring rope of the ship. A samurai guard struck him, smashing Nichiro's right arm.

Nichiren Shonin already aboard the boat, shouted loudly, "Please forgive him. He is so young." Then he called Nichiro loudly. Nichiro also called his master's name in a loud voice. Sending off Nichiren Shonin,

Nichiro repeatedly called his master and started chanting the daimoku. He was unable to put his hands together as one of his arms was broken.

Nichiren Shonin also started chanting the daimoku. The boat left the shore as the chorus of the daimoku filled the air. Disciples and followers burst into tears at the sorrow of parting on the beach.



The picture shows the departure of Nichiren Shonin from the Yuigahama beach, Kamakura. The woodblock print is reproduced from "Nichiren Daishi Shinjitsu-den"

Report of the Peace Mission to Chittagong

By Rev. Kanshin Mochida

From February 12 to 19, the Buddhist NGO Network (BNN) organized the Peace Mission Tour to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in Bangladesh. This program was held under the auspices of BNN and Jumma Net: a Japanese NGO consisting of well-informed persons about the situation, and three BNN committee members joined the tour (including an officer of the Missionary Department of the Nichiren Shu Headquarters).

BNN was founded on January 22, 2003, with 50 Buddhists from 40 denominations, including eminent Japanese Buddhist NGOs. The Nichiren Shu Headquarters also assigned two officers to BNN's planning committee.

On August 26, 2003, Bengali settlers attacked the indigenous inhabitants called Jumma, burning down 400 or so houses, raping more than 10 women, and massacring several people. In this incident, four traditional Buddhist temples were also destroyed. The Nichiren Shu International Fund immediately sent 500,000 yen for the recovery of the area through BNN, which, cooperated with Jumma Net, to help rebuild houses and to restore the agricultural projects with the collected donations of about 1,500,000 yen.

The background of the issue was complicated. The CHT is a mountainous area, comprising about 10 percent of the country, located in southeastern Bangladesh. From ancient times, Mongoloid people called Jumma have inhabited there, engaged in slash-and-burn agriculture. The Jumma people are now branched into 13 ethnic groups such as Chakma, Marma or Tripura, and number approximately 600,000. While the Bengalis on Bangladesh plains are almost all Muslims, the majority of the Jumma people are Buddhists.

In the British colonial period, the autonomy by the indigenous people was relatively recognized, but as soon as Bangladesh became independent in



Near PBM (the Parbatya Bouddha Mission), Ven. Sumanalankar (mid-left) and the Peace Mission members interviewing indigenous villagers who were attacked by Bengali settlers 3 years ago



Indigenous villagers offering bamboo water to Rev. Mochida

1971, the government started to ignore the Jumma cultures and their livelihood. Thus, the relationship between them grew worse until at last armed conflicts began, which lasted for more than 25 years. Moreover, in 1979 the government launched the colonization of the CHT, compulsively moving needy Bengali people under the condition of rationing food to them. It is said that by 1983

approximately 400,000 Bengalis were moved to the CHT. This not only made the political situation more complicated but also intensified the conflicts.

After the severe conflicts and massacres, counting more than 10 times, finally the peace treaty named "the CHT Accord" was signed between the government and the major resistance group called PCJSS (Parbatya Catgram Jana Samhsti Samiti). By this accord, with the proviso of the restoration of the plundered lands and of the recognition of limited autonomy, almost 2,000 armed partisans surrendered to the government, and most of the people had a hope for peace.

Nevertheless, the government side has not practiced the CHT Accord yet, so the tension between the Bengali migrants and the Jumma people has continued.

Incidentally, on February 13, 13 of the Peace Mission members entered the province of Khagrachari. Through the cooperation of the Parbatya Bouddha Mission (PBM), they visited Mahalchari, where the incursion took place in 2003, and Lemuchari, where a historical Buddhist temple was burned down. Especially, in the village of Lemuchari, the old temple used as the community center for the villagers was totally destroyed with its statue of the Buddha beheaded and thrown into the river nearby.

Meanwhile, the Peace Mission also visited a village of the Bengali settlers, regarded as one of the contested areas of the conflicts, and took a close look at the issue. That is, it can be said that it is a situation where victims have to fight with each other resulting in more victims. Those settlers were also victims, forcibly moved from various areas and not given adequate land to live. Half of the villagers there were relying on rations for food.

On the CHT, illegal occupation of the Jumma's lands by settlers persists day by day that the tension in the area is alarming. Ven. Sumanalankar Mahathero, Chairperson of PBM, who has been engaged in the peace movement with the support of Jumma Net in Japan, simply said, "I do not know whether I may be alive in the next several months."

About the issue, UNDP (United Nations Development Program) has already made a fair proposal of the support for the re-migration of the Bengali settlers, though, there has been no reply from the government yet. It is well known that Bangladesh is one of the major recipient countries of the international aid including the vast budget of the ODA (Official Development Assistance) from Japan. Therefore, we hope that the Bangladesh government will pay more attention to the climate of international opinion and consensus, and try to abide with the CHT Accord including the land problem.

The Study Tour to Laos

By Rev. Dairyo Tomikawa

From September 4 to 13, the overseas study tour for the Laotian school construction aid was held in the province of Champassak, Laos, under the auspices of the Nichiren Shu Headquarters. In cooperation with BAC: Buddhist Aid Center (Chairman: Rev. Katsu Ito of Kannoji Temple, Shizuoka), the project was aimed



Ms. Hitomi Amemiya lays bricks for the first time in her life

at taking along youth leaders for future international aid and overseas mission of Nichiren Shu through the fieldwork at the actual school construction site.

BAC, in partnership with the Ministry of Education of Laos, has been engaged in this project of school construction since 1993. A school of two to five classrooms costs some 3,000,000 yen to be built, and on the subscribers' list are Nichiren Shu and its district offices, Tendai Shu, universities or volunteers. BAC achieved its immediate goal of constructing 108 schools last December, and the site for the study tour this time will be 111th, or 32nd for Nichiren Shu.

Due to the lack of budget, the Ministry of Education of Laos inevitably seeks for foreign aid in order to build or rebuild the educational facilities. Nichiren Shu, besides that reason, decided to organize the study tour to support the international aid related to Nichiren Shu priests and find the successor to them for the next generation.

This time, nine participants from Nichiren Shu including college stu-



Rev. Tsuo Yokoi (left) reinforces a rod under the supervision of the field supervisor (right)

dents all in the 20s joined the tour. On February 3, at 18:30 they held the kickoff meeting at the international services in Tokyo, sponsored by the Missionary Department of the Headquarters. The next day they left for Laos, by air from Narita to Bangkok, by night train and bus from Bangkok to Laos.

The destination was a small village

along the Mekong River in the province of Champassak located in Southern Laos. Near the village there is a temple called Vat Phou registered as one of the World Cultural and Natural Heritages. The village had an elementary school, though, it was quite decrepit, and the village children have been waiting for a brand new schoolhouse. (continued on page 4)

SAN JOSE

Ohigan Service

The Spring Ohigan service for the family ancestors was held on Sunday, March 20 from 10 a.m. This service is held to make us recall many wonderful memories of our deceased beloved ones. It is an important Buddhist event which is held twice a year during the vernal and autumnal equinox. To leave this shore (this world) for the yonder shore (the Buddhahland), means to leave this world of illusion for the world of enlightenment. This is the day for us all to reflect on our daily life, vow to follow the path of the Buddha and observe memorial services for our ancestors.

25th Anniversary Projects

On October 22, 2005, the temple will be commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the San Jose Myokakuji Betsuin Temple with the following projects:

- 1) Ceremony on Saturday, October 22. All temple members and friends who are affiliated with the temple will be invited to the ceremony, luncheon and other events for the day.
- 2) Publication of a "Nichiren Shu" book.
- 3) Temple restoration: painting the Hondo and other renovation.

The estimated cost of \$35,000 for these projects will be partly covered by the bazaar profits of the past three years. However, \$20,000 more is needed. If you wish to make a contribution, please write your pledge and send it to the temple. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Chicken Teriyaki Bento

The annual chicken teriyaki box lunch (bento) with barazushi sale will be held on Sunday, April 17. Ticket sales started on March 1. Besides chicken teriyaki box lunches, there will be many other kinds of food like curry rice, noodles and vegetable dishes. There will also be a booth for cut flowers and crafts. The Tachibana School will have a manju sale. There will also be a koto musical performance and flower arrangements in

Church Events

By Sandra Seki



the Senshokan Hall. In order to build a better spiritual center, we ask everyone of you to kindly support this bazaar. Any monetary and /or material donation for this event is highly appreciated

SANGHA

Hanamatsuri and Kaishu-e

The Hanamatsuri and Kaishu-e were held on Sunday, April 3 from 11 a.m. at the Long Beach Japanese Culture Center.

HONOLULU

General Meeting Held

The general meeting of the members of the Nichiren Mission was held on Sunday, February 13. The meeting was called to order by the President (Eric Kawatani), an attendance sheet was circulated and the Treasurer presented his report which said that the finances in 2004 followed the trend of the past years, where the receipts of the Mission operations were short of expenditures and were supplemented by the income from the separate apartment account. The summary report showed an approximate \$25,000 shortfall even with the apartment supplemental income.

The President reported the state of the Mission:

- (a) The financial picture of the Mission has continued to deteriorate. The total revenues including the supplemental apartment income are not enough to pay for the expenses of the Mission. Ways of raising funds, using current funds more efficiently and finding ways to reduce expenditures need to be looked into.
- (b) Over the past several years the number of volunteers has dropped significantly. The Mission needs members' help and can only survive by the joint efforts of all its members.
- (c) The Mission plans to hold its first fellowship meeting of the Rainbow Conference in November 2005. This meeting is a statewide meeting of Nichiren Shu temples to encourage communication

and mutual assistance among the temples.

Fund Raising for Tsunami Victims

A special memorial service was held on January 9 for the victims of the earthquake and tsunami disaster which hit Indonesia and other countries in South East Asia last December. A donation drive also began for the victims by the Hawaii Buddhist Council. Donations were accepted till March 31. Your donations were sent to the victims via the International Red Cross Office.

LOS ANGELES

New Assistant Minister

Rev. Shogen Kumakura (45) arrived from New York on January 10, 2005, to assist Bishop Shokai Kanai. Rev. Kumakura became a Nichiren Shu minister in 2003 and had been helping at the New York Daiseionji. While assisting Bishop Kanai, he will learn and practice various requirements to become a full-time overseas minister. His future dream is to build a temple in New York near Ground Zero.

On the morning of the 9/11 terrorist attack, Rev. Kumakura was driving to the World Trade Center to attend a meeting. When he was a quarter of a mile from the Center, he saw a big ball of fire at the South Tower. The second plane had hit the Tower. The mysterious thing was that the meeting he was to attend had been delayed

for half an hour, so he luckily escaped the tragedy. He believes that he was protected by the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin. Rev. Kumakura realized that there was a reason for him to come to New York, and this tragedy was planned for him to realize something!

Afterwards he asked himself what he could do. His answer was to build a temple near Ground Zero and pray for the unfortunate lives that were lost.

After September 11, Ground Zero was literally a war zone. It was hell! So Rev. Kumakura was determined to change this place from Hell to Buddhahland with the merit of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin. "The terrorist attack was a terrible incident but we cannot leave it just in our memory; we must appeal to everyone to create a better world and peace. I am going to spread 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo' in New York and turn it into the eternal Buddha Land at Ground Zero," said Rev. Kumakura.

Taiko Practice Resumes

Taiko beating practice resumed at the newly built Koichi and Toyo Nerio Hall this January. The group meets at 7:30 p.m. once a month on the 4th Wednesday. Rev. Kanai will teach the group how to beat the taiko rhythms with two sticks to the Odaimoku, Jigage, Matsuri and others. All participants are requested to pay a fee of \$5.00 per session. The accumulated fund will be

used to purchase new taiko and other material and for hiring a professional instructor in the future. Anyone can join the practice, so please feel free to come and join the beat!

LACCF Hanamatsuri

The Hanamatsuri Service of the Los Angeles Buddhist Church Federation will be held at the JACCC Plaza at San Pedro St. and East 2nd St. in Little Tokyo at 1 p.m. on April 10. The service will be preceded by a children's chigo parade with a real elephant leading the way. Other events to kick off the celebration include the children's picture contest, haiku and photo exhibitions, a golf tournament on April 1, followed by the Little Tokyo cleanup on April 2.

On April 10, Duncan Williams, an assistant professor at U.C. Irvine will give an English lecture at 11 a.m. followed by Bishop Gengo Akiba of the Zenshuji Soto Mission, who will give a talk in Japanese about the Zen Experience.

Japanese classic dance, gagaku and taiko entertainment will be held after the service. The children's pictures, haiku and photos will be displayed at the Doizaki Gallery from April 10.-17.

There will be a Buddhist jazz night by June Kuramoto and Friends starting at 7 p.m. on Saturday, April 9. Tickets (\$15) will be available at the temple.

A memorial service for the tsunami victims of December 26, 2004, will precede the jazz concert. Sales from the candles at the entrance will go to the tsunami victims as a donation.

(continued from page 3)

From February 8th, the actual construction started, and the foundation work of carrying sand restlessly continued under the flaming sun at more than 30 centigrade. The next day, the participants suffered severe muscle pains, though, they engaged in the work to see the joyful faces of the village children. At the end of the morning the foundation work was completed, and they started piling bricks and assembling steel frames.

Communicating through simple Laotian words and body language, the participants learned the procedures from the local workers and at first were just awkwardly piling bricks. By the 3rd day, however, they were able to figure out what to do and started to work by themselves, and their growth was evident. In the afternoon, the tour participants held a volleyball match with villagers to strike up a friendship with them.

After the brick walls were completed, in the afternoon on February 11th, the presentation ceremony of the school



Mr. Shinji Hongo does his best in the intense heat to build an elementary school

was held. The participants received a traditional animistic ceremony 'Bashi,' treated with local wine 'Laolao.' The villagers, children and school staff danced the Laotian folk dance called 'Lam Vong,' showing their hospitality, and the study tour participants in return danced Japanese folk dances, 'Tokyo-ondo' and 'Tanko-bushi,' both Bon dances. Everyone

enjoyed the ceremony so much that some participants cried with joy.

One of the participants, Rev. Kisho Namio-ka from Hommyoji Temple in Hokkaido said, 'Laos is not a rich country, though, the people there do not think of themselves as poor or unhappy. I have come to know that international aid or NGO work are sometimes be harmful to the lives of local people. Even if the countries we live in are different, the relationship within us including the tour participants gave me a lot of things this time. I'd like to join the tour again.'

The Headquarters is planning to organize the study tour in this fiscal year, too.

(tr. km)

*Laos, the same in size as Honshu of Japan, is an inland country surrounded by China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar, and the great Mekong River runs at the border with Thailand. The approximate population is 5,500,000.

NICHIREN SHU NEWS

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