

The Nichiren Buddhist International Center

29490 Mission Blvd.
Hayward, CA 94544

Telephone: (510) 690-1222

Fax: (510) 690-1221

Web site: www.nichiren-shu.org

E-mail: NBIC@nichiren-shu.org

No. 41 / 2003 • Autumn

I N D E X



THE WORLD OF THE ODAIMOKU - PART 5

The Tatsunokuchi Persecution

Rev. Junichi Nakamura P. 1~2



Wedding Ceremony in America

Rev. Shokai Kanai P. 3



The Path to Righteousness

C. Cook P. 4~5



The Lotus Sutra for children

Rev. Koke Matsumoto P. 6~7



New Books P. 5

Workshop on Nichiren Buddhism P. 7

Dear Friends of NBIC

Thank you for reading our newsletter, "the Bridge." We hope to make the "Bridge" useful and informative. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to send them to the center. Your generous donation is greatly appreciated. Please make your

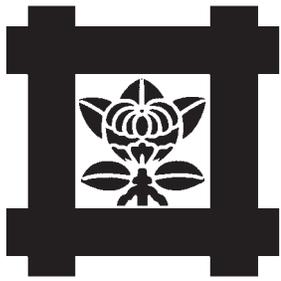
Donation payable to:
NBIC
29490 Mission Blvd.
Hayward, CA 94544

Thank you for your support.
Nichiren Buddhist
International Center



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (May, 2003 – July, 2003)

Rita Rouse, George Jeffus, Marcus Barlow, Ronald Funt,
Tour group from Japan, Rev. Ekyo Tsuchida,
Rev. Koke Matsumoto, Minobusan Choir, Akihisa Kawai,
Rev. Giichi Kamikura, Nichiren Shu Young Ministers
Association of Kanagawa 1-bu District,
Rev. Takashi Kiuchi, Rev. Nichikan Shinozuka



THE WORLD OF THE ODAIMOKU – PART 5

The Tatsunokuchi Persecution

Article by Jun-ichi Nakamura
Illustrated by Hiroshige Katsu

AWAKENING HACHIMAN AS A PROTECTIVE DEITY

Nichiren Shōnin revered the Shinto deities. One could also say that the Shinto deities revered Nichiren Shōnin. In 2002, Archbishop Nichikō Fujii visited Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine to commemorate the 750th anniversary of Nichiren Shōnin's mission in Kamakura. Nichiren Shōnin stopped at this shrine on the way to Tatsunokuchi where the government attempted to execute him on September 12, 1271. You may wonder why a Buddhist minister stopped at a Shinto shrine. But this was normal for Nichiren Shōnin.

The deity Hachiman is one of the ancestral gods of the Japanese emperor. Hachiman is a very popular deity in Japan, so there are many Hachiman shrines throughout the country. Hachiman was also very important for Yoritomo Minamoto, who founded the Kamakura Government in the Twelfth Century, because he was a protective god of the Minamoto Clan and also a protective deity of peace. Today, Hachiman is also known as "Great Bodhisattva Hachiman." Why is he called "great bodhisattva" if he is a Shinto deity? About two hundred years after Buddhism's arrival in Japan in 538, the Japanese people started calling Shinto deities "Bodhisattva." This practice began around the end of Nara Period (710-794). Shinto deities are said to protect the nation and save its people just like the buddhas and bodhisattvas described in Buddhist sutras. Because of this, the Japanese began to regard their Shinto deities as manifestations of these protective buddhas and bodhisattvas. This interpretation is called *honji suijaku*, which means "Buddhas and Bodhisattvas manifest as Shinto deities."

Why did Nichiren Shōnin ask to stop at the Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine on the way to the execution grounds? The soldiers who were escorting him probably thought that he was going to beg Hachiman to save his life. Instead, Nichiren Shōnin faced the Hachiman Shrine and loudly scolded the deity. "Is Great Bodhisattva Hachiman a real deity?" said Nichiren Shōnin. "I, Nichiren, am a



true practitioner of the Lotus Sutra in Japan [whom you have vowed to protect in the sutra]. Besides, I have no fault in myself." (*Shuju Onfurumai Gosho*) The soldiers must have been surprised at Nichiren Shōnin's bold behavior. He went on to remind Hachiman that if the nation was destroyed by Mongolian invaders, even the deities wouldn't be safe.

Nichiren Shōnin had wanted to save Japan from its troubles – for instance, the impending Mongolian invasion – so he wrote the *Rissho Ankoku Ron* to tell the government what it was doing wrong. Without considering the danger to his own life in criticizing the military dictatorship, he pointed out the errors that the government was making. He wrote,

... I searched through some sutras and came to the conclusion that the cause of national calamities comes from all the people being against the right dharma, siding with false dharmas. Therefore, protective deities and sages abandoned the country, and will not return. This has allowed various evils and devils to invade, causing disasters and calamities. How can I not point this out! How can I not be afraid of this! (*Writings of Nichiren Shōnin: Doctrine 1*, p. 108)

He was very likely frustrated with the feeling that nobody understood his motivations. Even the deities, it seemed, were not paying attention. He must have wanted to give Hachiman another chance to fulfill his vow to protect the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra, since it seemed inevitable that he would be executed by the government.

I, Nichiren will be executed tonight. Then, when I go to the Pure Land of Mt. Sacred Eagle, I will tell Sakyamuni Buddha that the deities Tenshō and Hachiman did not accept my invocation. (*Shuju Onfurumai Goshō*)

EMPOWERED BY THE BUDDHA'S WISDOM

One can see Nichiren Shōnin's deep feeling for these deities in his words. You might think that Nichiren Shōnin was filled with regret. But he wrote in the same work,

Since I was born in poor circumstances, my filial piety for my parents is insufficient and I also do not have enough power to repay my duty to the nation. This time, I will offer my head to the Lotus Sutra and send my prayer to my parents.

The merit of my offering should also be shared with my disciples and followers.

He was ready for death. In such a situation, Nichiren Shōnin appealed to Hachiman because he wanted the deity to be awakened as a true Buddhist deity. He believed as Buddhism teaches that deities are the followers of the Buddha Dharma. Because of this, the deities are disciples and the Lotus Sutra is the master.

Chapter seven of the Lotus Sutra, called "The Parable of a Magic City," tells the story of Buddha Great-Universal-Wisdom-Excellence. When he attained enlightenment, the worlds in every direction were illuminated by the light of his wisdom. Brahman Heavenly Kings, who created those worlds, felt joy and offered their own palaces to the Buddha. At that time they vowed,

May the merits we have accumulated by this offering
 – Be distributed among all living beings,
 – And may we and all other living beings
 – Attain the enlightenment of the Buddha!

(Murano, p. 139)

"We" means all deities and "all living beings" means us, human beings, and also every other living being. In other words, the *Lotus Sutra* teaches that every living being and all the deities of heaven are empowered by the Buddha's wisdom. This is one of the reasons why Nichiren Shōnin believed that spreading peace throughout country should be accomplished through the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Then the Shinto deities could accomplish their mission.

Finally, did the deities reply to Nichiren Shōnin's earnest prayer that day?

On the night of September 11, 1271, Hei-no-Saemon-no-jo Yoritsuna, who was in charge of the government's soldiers, lead his soldiers in an attack on Nichiren Shōnin's hermitage at Matsubagayatsu. He charged Nichiren as a criminal because he "prays for the defeat of the nation of Japan, the most important nation in the world." The real

reason that the government wanted to arrest Nichiren Shōnin because he criticized the ministers of other temples in Kamakura who were linked to the government. Because they were in disgrace, they instigated the government to arrest Nichiren Shōnin so the blame would be diverted from themselves.

Thus, Yoritsuna chose an extreme measure. He decided to execute Nichiren Shōnin secretly, using the official order to exile him as a pretext. On the night of September 12, Nichiren Shōnin was taken to the execution grounds at Tatsunokuchi. On the way to Tatsunokuchi, Nichiren Shōnin remonstrated with Hachiman at the Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine as described above. The group finally arrived at the execution grounds at about 1:00 a.m. the following morning.

Kingo Shijo, one of Nichiren Shōnin's most devoted lay followers, came with the group. He was crying hard and was about to kill himself. Nichiren Shōnin told him, "You are losing your mind. You should be smiling for joy [since I have the opportunity to offer my life to the Buddha]."

They arrived at the execution grounds on Tatsunokuchi beach, and the executioner lifted his sword to behead Nichiren Shōnin. In a letter, Nichiren Shōnin himself explained what had happened next: "An object shining like the moon at the edge of Enoshima Island flew like a lighting ball from southeast to northwest." All of the government's men were terrified, and the executioner was unable to perform his duty. Since the government could not execute Nichiren Shōnin because of the heavenly sign of displeasure, they ended up exiling him to Sado Island as they had originally ordered.

Did Hachiman reply to Nichiren Shōnin's prayer by miraculously preventing his execution? There is no proof, of course. However, it certainly seems that Nichiren Shōnin received protection from the deities although he was facing many difficulties, and he continued to deepen his self-awakening as a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra.

Ceremonies in Nichiren Shu

Wedding Ceremony in America



Rev. Shokai Kanai – Los Angeles Nichiren Buddhist Temple

The wedding ceremony is one of the most important events in our life. However, the number of couples who remain married are decreasing every year both here in America and in Japan. Fifty years ago, twelve out of every 1,000 people in the U.S. were married, but it is now eight out of every 1,000 people. According to the 1975 census in Japan, 95 percent of the population over 40 years old were married, but it is 70 percent now.

Nevertheless, it is said that the number of wedding ceremonies have increased since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks that occurred in the eastern coast of the United States due to people feeling the anxiety of being alone. I myself have personally conducted three wedding ceremonies in the past year.

The wedding ceremony conducted in a Nichiren Shu temple or church where the Mandala Gohonzon is enshrined is very formal. However, ceremonies outside of the temple are more popular in America these days. They are held in various places, such as the banquet room of a hotel, a private wedding house, the beach, or in a garden to name a few locations.

Chapter 21 of the Lotus Sutra says, “Be it in a garden, in a forest, under a tree, in a monastery, or in the wilderness, there should be a *stupa* erected and offerings be made to it, because we know the place where the *stupa* is erected is the place of enlightenment. Here the Buddhas attained *Anuttara-samyaku-sambodhi*. Here the Buddhas turned the wheel of the Dharma. Here the Buddhas entered into *Pari-Nirvana*.”

Therefore, when I perform a wedding, I take a set of the altar, such as the *Gohonzon*, a candle stand, an incense burner and a flower vase to wherever the ceremony is held.

The music played at a wedding could be the traditional wedding march in the western style, *gagaku* (traditional Japanese noble music), Hawaiian songs, or other music. It is up to the couple’s taste. The most important matter is for the couple to make their marriage vow in front of the Nichiren Shu *Mandala Gohonzon* which is the symbol of universal harmony.

The order of the ceremony may differ depending on the efficient, so I will not describe it here. The traditional ring exchange is of course held. Besides the ring exchange, there will be a presentation of ‘juzu’ rosary from the efficient, incense offering, recitation of the Lotus Sutra, chanting the O’Daimoku, “Namu Myoho Renge Kyo” in unison and the traditional Japanese ‘*san, san, kudo*.’ This is the ceremony in which three sake sips are taken with three different size *sake* cups between the couple. “Three” is an indivisible and lucky number. So the nine sips

taken from the sake cups symbolize triple happiness. It is a wish and prayer for the newly wed couple not to be separated.

However, after many years have passed since the wedding, many couples insist on their own selfish ego. They may grieve, “Marriage life is inconvenient! I cannot do what I want to do!” However, an ideal marriage life is one where you can change your inconvenience to feel happiness no matter what your spouse does. Make your spouse’s dream your own dream. Then you can help each other. Marriage life is a part of Buddhist practices.

Chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra says, “*Ekka Shu Shin*” which means “*The Buddha makes living beings delighted*.” Chapter 16 of the same sutra says, “*In Go Shin Ren Bo*” which means “Because you fall in love (to the Buddhas).” Buddhas are not outside of you or your spouse. They are within you and within your spouse. Marriage life is a wonderful way to practice the Lotus Sutra.



• Nichiren Shu altar with the Great Mandala for wedding ceremony



C. Cook
— Honolulu, Hawaii

Hello my name is C. Cook and I am a third year student at the University of Southern California. I am studying International Relations and Business, and hope to be a lawyer. I am very thankful to have the Buddha as part of my life. There have been many times that I have felt that the Buddha has supported me. The Buddha also inspires me to become a good person.

Over the years I have learned that praying really does help, but one must pray for the “right” things. I used to pray for

The Path to Righteousness

everything- from material things to good grades in school. When I look back on that, I was a very selfish person, always praying for myself, but that is a flaw that everyone in this world has. I believe the only way to avoid being a truly selfish person is to pray for others. By doing so, the Buddha will grant us what we need to be happy. We don't need materialistic things to be happy- we need health and families.

Looking thru the “Hasu no Oshie” book one day, I stumbled upon the Eightfold Noble Path and realized that I did not know them. I took a few moments to browse through the pages and asked myself if I lived the Eightfold Noble Path. Of course, my answer was “no” because I have many sins. The Eightfold Noble Path taught me not to live in extremities. Carefully inspecting all Noble Paths, I came to the conclusion about each of the following Eight and how they apply to my life.

The first path is that of **Right View**. With Right View, we see things as they are and do not see false appearances or are not lured into the trap of materialism. Three key factors (the Three Seals) are included in this path: there is no

permanency in anything, nothing has personality, and reality is bliss. In my mind, I often find myself not seeing things the way they are. For example, commercials advertising cigarettes or alcohol deceive the “mentally weak” to believe that if they drink or smoke a particular product, they will be good looking and happy. That is the false appearance. However, if one sees the product for what it really is, they would see that the product is actually harmful to their health. The Buddha's guidance helps us not to be mentally weak.

The second path is **Right Emotion**, which says to love Buddha, love others, and love oneself. We must make whatever knowledge we receive our own in order to make it have influencing capabilities (another word for this is opinion). We must love ourselves in order to love others, and that includes the Buddha.

The third path is **Right Conversation**, which says to abstain from lying, boasting, and using foul language. I sadly always use foul language and lie occasionally. The Buddha guides us away from the path of corruption and evil temptation.

Right!

Right Conduct is the fourth path and it tells us to keep the body clean and to abstain from misconduct. In my belief, keeping the body clean means to abstain from extremities such as alcoholism and drug use. I am proud to say that I am a healthy person who does not use drugs or drinks alcohol. Right Conduct also includes being righteous, but what does it mean to be righteous? In my opinion, being righteous means to be kind to others and lead them to the Dharma, as the book says.

Right Living is the fifth path and says to live cleanly and righteously with the Buddha. We must be generous and whole in giving back to those who are less fortunate than us. This will help us spread the Dharma. I donate many of the things I do not need anymore to shelters that may need it.

Right Effort is the sixth path and includes Four Noble Efforts: to prevent sins from happening in the future, to overcome past sins, to create virtuousness in one's life in the future, and to keep close one's virtues of the past. This is a model for which we shall follow. We are easily tempted to the dark and evil side, which looks good at first, but will harm us in the future. The Buddha keeps us levelheaded in this situation.

The seventh path is that of **Right Meditation**. There are Four Virtues: True World, Real Body, Real Mind-Objects, and Real Mind. The Four Boundless Affections well complement the Four Virtues: to love, to feel sorry, to appreciate, and to forgive others. When I meditate, the Four Virtues always come to my mind. I believe that it is tough to meditate, but the Buddha helps me in that I

feel like a slightly different person when I arise from my meditative state.

The last noble path is **Right Faith**, which tells us that we must have faith in the Buddha. He teaches us to believe in the Four Fearlessness: I am the Enlightened One, I am the Blessed One, I am Your Protector from the evil, and I am the Teacher of the Truth. I am never hesitant or scared to put all of my faith in the Buddha because He has made my life on Earth a comfortable one. I hold the love for the Buddha close to my heart.

The Eightfold Noble Path is a way of life that all should follow. Although our lives may never be a perfect model of the Eightfold Noble Path, the Buddha always keeps us on the Path to Righteousness.

New Books

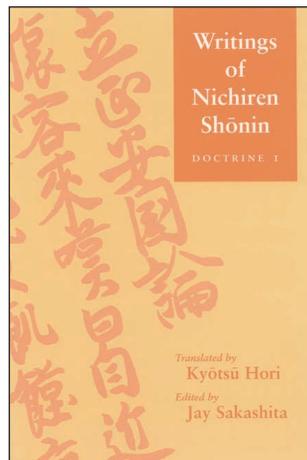
● "Writings of Nichiren Shōnin – Doctrine 1"

Published by Nichiren Shu Overseas Propagation Promotion Association
Distributed by University of Hawaii Press

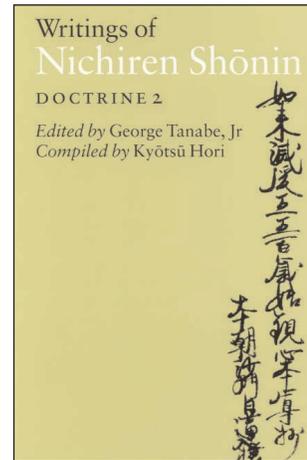
This volume constitutes all eighteen writings of Buddhist reformer Nichiren Shōnin (1222-1282) included in the Nichiren Shōnin Zenshū (Complete Writings of Nichiren Shōnin), Volume 1: Theology 1, published in Tokyo in 1992. The Nichiren Shōnin Zenshū is a modern Japanese version of Nichiren's original writings, translated and edited with

annotations by modern scholars of Nichiren Buddhism. Despite its all-inclusive titles, the Zenshū is highly selective in that it takes into account only writings considered bibliographically authentic (i.e., attested to by original manuscripts). Among such texts, those included in the Shōwa Teihon Nichiren

Shōnin Iibun (Writings of Nichiren Shōnin Standardized in the Shōwa Period), compiled by the Risho Daigaku Nichiren Kyogaku Kenkyu-jo (Center for the Study of Nichiren Buddhism), are considered the most authoritative, and they provide the basic texts for this volume.



• *Writings of Nichiren Shōnin — Doctrine 1*



• *Writings of Nichiren Shōnin — Doctrine 2*

The Volume 1 includes "Shugo Kokka-ron," "Risho Ankoku-ron" "Senji-sho" and other 15 writings.

The Volume 2 "Writings of Nichiren Shonin – Doctrine 2" is also available. For both volumes, we ask your donation \$18.00 per copy plus s/h \$3.00.

The Lotus Sutra for children

by Rev. Koke Matsumoto • Translated by Rev. Shokai Kanai

(The book was written for grandparents and parents to read to their children. The content is very deep but easy for all to understand.)

THE PRINCE IS SAKYAMUNI BUDDHA (VOLUME 1)

~ Chapter 4 ~

THE PRINCE'S WORRY

“Why did my mother die and leave me, a new born baby? My mother must have been so sad to leave me alone! Why do people have to die?” Prince Siddhartha often thought about his mother’s death for many hours and days.

The wise Prince, thinking about his father and foster mother feelings, never showed that he was lonesome and sad in front of them. But when he was alone, he thought about his dead mother. One spring day he saw a farmer plowing his field. He noticed a bird descending to the ground and carrying off a small worm which had been turned up from the earth by the farmer’s plough. He thought about it, whispering to himself, “Alas! Do all living creatures kill each other?” He, who had lost his mother so soon after his birth, was deeply affected by the tragedy of these little creatures.

“Why did you die? Why can I not be happy, while my parents and people of the kingdom are joyous about me becoming a great King? Why am I not excited to be a king? To become a king, I must fight with other countries and kill many people. The children of the killed and wounded people must feel lonesome and sad. I do not want to be a king who makes others suffer, defeats the weak, and gains their lands and estates. How can men be equal and happy? How can families live together and help each other live in peace and harmony?” Thus Prince Siddhartha was talking to his dead mother.

~ Chapter 5 ~

THE PRINCE'S WEDDING

The King was worried about the Prince’s suffering because of his mother’s death. He tried to cheer him up by turning his thoughts toward other directions. The Prince was already 18 years old.

“You should marry a princess soon,” said the King.



Prince Siddhartha, however, had no intention of marrying. But because of his father’s strong recommendation, he married Princess Yashodhara. Another reason he decided to marry the beautiful and warm-hearted Yashodhara was that

she was Queen Maya’s niece. The Prince felt peaceful and calm when he was with the Princess. He felt as if he was with his mother. Embraced with her beauty and tenderness, he was happy and forgot his loneliness. Yashodhara was an ideal Princess. Soon they were expecting a baby. They were so happy!

~ Chapter 6 ~

WORRY ABOUT BIRTH AND DEATH

As the day of the baby’s birth approached, the Prince thought more and more about his deceased mother and his appreciation of her. His eyes filled with tears while thinking about her devotion. His mother was only able to give her son her affection for one week before she died.

Soon, a baby was born and named Rahula. Prince Siddhartha, chuckling with delight, kissed his son’s cheek. “Looking at my son makes me feel so happy! I could forget all my worries!”

His happiness, however, did not last for long.



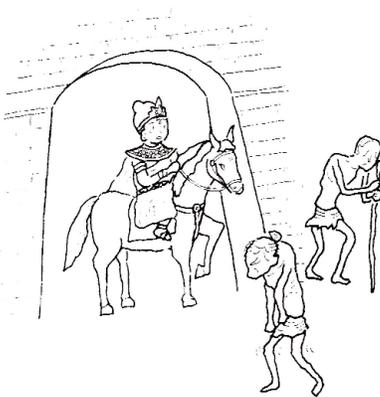
Prince Siddhartha looked up at the sky and wondered, "Why must a man become old? When he gets old, why does he become ill? When he becomes ill, why does he die? Why? Why did my mother pass away at such a young age? Why do people have to die? Does anything exist after one's death?" Thus, the Prince wondered the same things again and again, hour after hour.

— Chapter 7 —

SEEING THE REALITY OF THE WORLD

Outside of the Four Gates

"Do I also die? If I was dead, Rahula and Princess Yashodhara would be lonesome just as I was when my mother died. Is there any way for a man to live forever? Is there any way to be free from birth, old age, sickness and death? How is it possible for a person to be free from these sufferings and to keep peace in his mind?"



One day he went out of the palace with several servants. At first, he went out of the east gate and saw an old man who looked lonesome. His back was bent and he was mumbling meaningless words. Although Siddhartha had no way to understand his mumbling, the Prince seemed to understand the old

man might be worried about the uncertainness of his life. He was afraid of sickness and death.

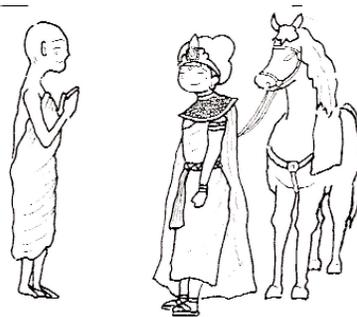
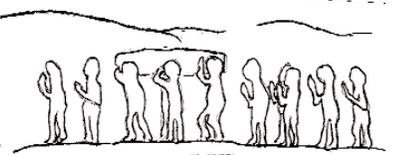
The next day he went out of the castle from the south gate. He and his attendants saw a very sick man.

The man said with a very weak voice, "I don't want to die!"

On the third day, they went out of the west gate and saw a funeral procession. The people looked very sad. Some people were crying. The Prince saw these griev-



ing people and thought his own heart would break. He thought, "Why must a man die? A child grieves with the death of his parent. Parents are sad with the death of their child. A husband mourns the death of his wife. A wife laments her husband's death. Why is a man's life so uncertain?"



At last, Prince Siddhartha went out of the north gate. A pure hearted monk was waiting for the Prince. He bowed to the Prince respectfully. At that

time, Siddhartha felt something strange. It felt like pure spring water had sprung up within him. He later made up his mind.

WORKSHOP ON NICHIREN BUDDHISM

"Workshop on Nichiren Buddhism" will be held on Saturday, September 13 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Nichiren Buddhist International Center in Hayward, CA. The program will include

1. "Making own prayer beads"
2. Lecture on the Lotus Sutra
3. "Copying the Buddha image and Copying the Sutra"
4. Lecture on teachings of Nichiren Shu
5. "Meditation practice"

Fee is \$30.00 per person including all materials and lunch. If you want to participate in the workshop, please send the fee along with your name, address, phone number and/or e-mail address by September 5 (sharp!). For further information, please contact NBIC by phone or e-mail.