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No. 48 / 2005 • Autumn

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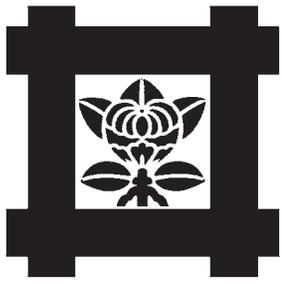


ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

(June '05 – August, '05)

George Jeffus, Susan Briglia, Maximilian Calderwood, Ronald Funt, Kalessin Winter, Rev. Shokei Steffens, Tsugio Aihara, Alex Ang & Ms. Leong, Chua Xin Juan, Lai Lyun, Kannonji (Malaysia), Patricia Musgrove

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THE WORLD OF THE ODAIMOKU – PART 11

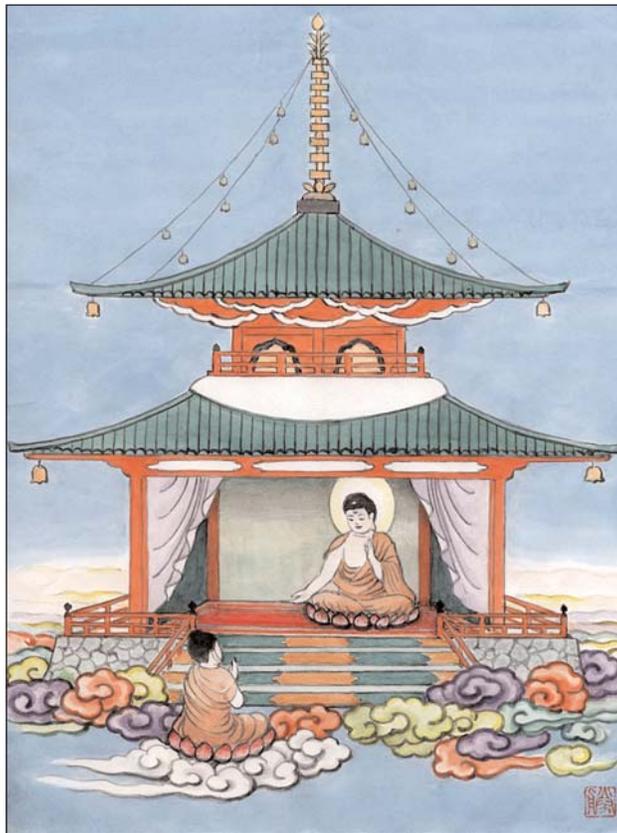
Śākyamuni Buddha is invited into the stupa by Many-Treasures Buddha

In the last issue I talked about the Odaimoku, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo* that is the core of the Great Mandala.

Now please look at the Buddhas' names on either side of the Odaimoku of the great Mandala, *Namu Śākamuni-Butsu* or "Honor be to Śākyamuni Buddha" and *Namu Tabo-Nyorai* or "Honor be to Many-Treasures Buddha" which are inscribed on either side of the Odaimoku.

When you visit a Nichiren Shū temple, have you ever wondered why you face the two Buddhas of Śākamuni and Many-Treasures sitting side by side on the altar? Other Buddhist schools enshrine one Buddha statue.

But many Nichiren Shū temples enshrine the two Buddhas, one on each side of the Odaimoku which is in the center. This form of enshrining the Buddhas is called *Itto Ryoson*, or One Stupa with Two Buddhas. There is another form called *Isson Shishi*, or One Buddha with Four Bodhisattvas. To learn more about *Isson Shishi*, please see the footnote for more detail.



Rev. Jun-ichi Nakamura

Illustration by
Hiroshige Katsu

“Excellent, excellent! You, Śākyamuni, the World Honored One, have expounded to this great multitude the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, the Teaching of Equality, the Great Wisdom, the Dharma for Bodhisattvas. So it is, so it is. What you, Śākyamuni, the World Honored One, have expounded is all true.”

This phrase of Chapter Eleven, “Beholding the Stupa of Treasures”, is read often at services. Do you know who

Śākyamuni Buddha was preaching the *Lotus Sutra* beginning with Chapter One, “Introduction” and proceeding to Chapter Eleven, “Beholding the Stupa of Treasures”, when suddenly a great stupa decorated with brilliant treasures rose into the sky from the ground, and a loud voice echoed from inside the stupa;

spoke these words? Many-Treasures Buddha is the one who spoke. According to the *Lotus Sutra*, Many-Treasures Buddha came from a World called Treasure-Purity located in the far east of this world. Why did this Buddha come to this world? He appeared because he wanted to prove that the *Lotus Sutra* expounded by Śākyamuni Buddha is the most excel-

lent teaching of all. Therefore, we call him *Namu Shomyo Hokke Taho Nyorai*, or “Honor be to Many-Treasures Buddha who proves the Lotus Sutra.” Why is the world of Many-Treasures Buddha located in the east? People in ancient India believed that the world of the past was located in the east and the world of the future is located in the west. Amida Buddha vowed to save people after they passed from this world and it is believed that his world, the world of *Gokuraku Jodo*, or heavenly pure land, is located in the west. The people of the ancient world were wishing for something better than this world and they believed it had to be far away from here.

However, in order to be happy in our future lives, it is very important for us to do the right things in this present time and also to look back at the past.

When Śākyamuni Buddha was about to preach the most excellent teaching of the Lotus Sutra, Many-Treasures Buddha appeared before the audience. In the remote past, Many-Treasures Buddha pledged that when the Lotus Sutra was preached in the Universe or any land of the ten directions, he would gather all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas there and have them listen to the Sutra.

Now Many-Treasures Buddha invited Śākyamuni Buddha into the stupa suspended in the air. Being in the air was a more appropriate stage to expound the essential section of the Lotus Sutra than Mt. Sacred Eagle on the earth.

The Lotus Sutra describes the scene: “Thereupon Many-Treasures Buddha in the stupa of treasures offered a half of this seat to Śākyamuni Buddha, saying, Śākyamuni Buddha, sit here!”

Responding to the request, Śākyamuni Buddha entered into the stupa immediately and sat to the right of Taho Buddha. Remember the “right,” of Taho Buddha will be the left when we are facing the altar. Śākyamuni Buddha is on our left side and Many-Treasures Buddha is on our right side.

Finally all the conditions are ready to reveal the true Dharma. What kind of words will the Buddha speak? He said, “Who will expound the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma in this Saha-World?”

You may wonder why the Buddha was asking who would expound the Sutra. The expounder should be the Buddha and the audience should be listeners. However, the Buddha was thinking, “It is not good enough just to listen to the Dharma. Once you listen, you should try to transmit the Dharma and spread it to others.”

He began speaking, “Now is the time to do this. I shall enter into Nirvana before long.” Next to Śākyamuni Buddha, Many-Treasures was nodding in agreement. We should realize that at this scene of the Buddha’s preaching in the stupa of treasures in the air, the three periods of past, present and future are revealed simultaneously, because the Lotus Sutra has been expounded by the Buddha for us now, who are living in the Latter Age of Degeneration (Mappo).



Note:

Itto-Ryoson & Isson-Shishi

Itto-Ryoson means one stupa and two Buddhas. Inside the stupa there are Śākyamuni Buddha and Many-Treasures Buddha sitting on either side of the Odaimoku, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*. This is one of forms of enshrining the Honzon (the Most Honored One).

Isson-Shishi means one Buddha and four Bodhisattvas. This is another form of enshrining the Honzon. Śākyamuni Buddha’s statue stands in the center and the Four Great Bodhisattvas, *Jogyo*, or Superior-Practice, *Muhengyo*, or Limitless-Practice, *Jogyo*, or Pure-Practice and *Anryūgyo*, or Steadily-Established-Practice are standing on both sides of the Buddha. The Four Great Bodhisattvas are leaders of the Bodhisattvas who sprang up from underground. They had responded to Śākyamuni Buddha’s request. This scene is described in Chapter 15, “The Appearance of Bodhisattvas from Underground” in the Lotus Sutra. Those Bodhisattvas are classified into the category called Honge. Honge means disciples of the Original Buddha appearing in the Essential Section of the Lotus Sutra and they were enlightened by the Buddha in the remotest past. The form of *Isson-Shishi*, one Buddha and four Bodhisattvas, represents that the Odaimoku, *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*, which is the Buddha’s practice as cause to be enlightened as well as virtue as effect of His practice, is transmitted to us, who are ordinary people living in the Latter Age of Degeneration, by the Four Great Bodhisattvas who have the mission to spread the Lotus Sutra in the Age of Degeneration.

Nichiren Shōnin teaches us to devote ourselves to the *Honzon*, the Most Honored One, of the Essential Section of the Lotus Sutra with making this section the core of Buddhism. According to Nichiren Shōnin’s doctrine, the two forms of Honzon mentioned above are based on the same principle with different aspects.

All Japan Nichiren Shū Youth Ministers Association Participated in Peace March in New York City.

“Namu Myoho Renge Kyo. Namu Myoho Renge Kyo.” On May 1st under the clear sky in the center of New York City, Manhattan, the loud chanting of the Odaimoku and sound of drums echoed among the skyscrapers.

On August 6th, 1945 in Hiroshima and August 8th in Nagasaki atomic bombs were used for the first time in the history and killed hundreds of thousands innocent people. This year is the 60th year anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bombs.

On May 1st Prior to 2005 the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference which was held from May 2 to May 27, a mass scale peace march took place and about forty thousand people took two hours to march two miles from a starting place near the United Nations Headquarters to Central Park. During

the march, they appealed for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Among the participants, there were 23 members of the All Japan Nichiren Shū Youth Ministers Association who acted to accomplish Nichiren Shōnin’s wish “*Rissho Ankoku*,” establishing peace throughout the countries by spreading the right Dharma and “*Itten Shikai Kaiki Myoho*,” under the heaven and within the four seas may all beings return to the Wonderful Dharma. Also seven members of the Rissho Peace Association of Nichiren Shū joined the march. They collected seventeen thousand sixty one signatures of those who wish the abolition of nuclear weapons from throughout Japan and

submitted them along with the other ten millions signatures from Japan to the NPT conference chairperson.

They were following a big banner saying “Namu Myoho Renge Kyo for World Peace.” Rev. Join Inoue, who is a minister of New York Daiseionji Temple joined the march along with the temple’s members.

Nichiren Shū has started a new campaign, “*Rissho Ankoku, Odaimoku Kechien*,” establishing world peace by spreading the right Dharma and making people connect with the Odaimoku. This campaign is based on the principle: “absolute respect for life.” The Odaimoku peace march in New York was a first step to make *Rissho Ankoku* realized in this world.



▲ Forty thousand people participated in the peace march in New York City on May 1.

YOUNG LAY LEADERS OF NICHIREN-SHU GATHER TOGETHER

2005 International Youth Leader Retreat was held at NBIC



▲ Twelve youth leaders attended the Youth Retreat held at NBIC.

▼ The youth leaders listened to a lecture in the classroom.



As Nichiren Shū spreads globally, there are numbers of young people practicing the Odaimoku all over the world. Representing young Nichiren Buddhists, their leaders gathered together at the Nichiren Buddhist International Center in Hayward, California to participate in 2005 Youth Leaders Retreat sponsored by Nichiren Shū Head-

quarters from July 26 to July 28.

Twelve young leaders from Malaysia, Singapore, Hawaii and North America, ages from 16 to 28, are active members of their regional temples. They gathered for the retreat with a strong wish to strengthen their faith and improve their qualities as leaders.

On the first day of the retreat, in spite of fatigue caused by long flights from Southeast Asia, Hawaii, South Carolina and so forth, all participants were so excited and attended the opening ceremony. Rev. Giko Tabata, director of the Missionary Department of Nichiren Shū Headquarters and chief instructor of the retreat, gave a speech to the participants, “A main theme of this retreat is ‘Now, Here, and Myself.’ Please try to learn what the theme means to you and spend a meaningful three days at this retreat.” Immediately after orientation, Rev. Ryuken Akahoshi, general manager of NBIC, gave a lecture on a topic, “What does ‘Here’ mean to you?”

After the first lecture, they visited California State University East Bay (formerly Cal State Univ. Hayward). They took a campus tour with the possibility to study there in the future if they like. After supper, they practiced Shōdaigyō meditation for one hour by candle light only. They finished a busy schedule on the first day and returned to the hotel at 9:00 p.m. The participants quickly became good friends with each other and stayed up late chatting.

The second day started with a morning service conducted all in English. In the morning Bishop Shokai Kanai, Bishop of Nichiren Order of North America, gave his lecture, “Now” and Rev. Tabata gave a lecture on “Myself.” After a lunch break, they had a discussion period with two groups. They dis-

cussed questions on the lectures as well as how they can contribute to society as Nichiren Buddhists.

They practiced a one hour Shōdaigyō meditation while seeking the meaning of “myself”, and then went out of the center to clean up the side walk and a public park. The purpose of this program was to make our community a pure land by cleaning up the neighborhood. Even though they walked only a few blocks while picking up debris, they filled up all 15 plastic bags. They were shocked how dirty the streets were.

After they sweated a lot with the volunteer work, they enjoyed a Sayonara dinner at a Chinese restaurant. On the final evening a candle light service was held in the dark worship room. Along with Rev. Tabata’s thoughtful speech, all the participants and staff were thinking about the main theme of the retreat, “Now, Here and Myself.”

On the morning of the final day, they listened to Rev. Tabata’s summary of the retreat and then they attended the closing ceremony. Every one of the participants received a certificate and showed their appreciation to each staff by shaking hands. Until the last minute before they left the center, they exchanged mail addresses and busily chatted. We hope that they will be a great help in spreading the Odaimoku in their own countries.

The Lotus Sutra for children

by Rev. Koge 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.)

INTRODUCTION CHAPTER OF THE LOTUS SUTRA (VOLUME 2)

— Chapter 7 —

BODHISATTVAS, GODS, AND KINGS ARE PRESENT

What was He going to talk about? What was the One and Only Truth that He had not taught yet? The entire congregation held their breath, without blinking and coughing, and watched Buddha’s face and wor-

shipped Him with holding their hands together in *gassho*.

Among the Buddha’s disciples, there was Manjusri Bodhisattva who rides on the back of a lion. He was well known not only around the world but also in the universe. Compassionate World-Voice-Perceiver Bodhisattva (Kannon Bosatsu), wise Great-Power-Obtainer Bodhisattva who wears a crown on his head, and Medicine-King Bodhisattva who was standing





帝釈天の釈提桓因
Sakra-Devanam-Indra



Asura-King
闘争神の
阿修羅王



Kimnara-King
歌舞をよくする
緊那羅王



龍を食する鳥類の王
迦楼羅王
Garuda-King



香を食する帝釈天付きの
乾闥婆王
Gandharva-King

with a flag in his left hand were also in attendance. Brave-In-Giving Bodhisattva and Moon-Light Bodhisattva were standing while straining to hear. Maitreya Bodhisattva was sitting on a rock in deep thought and waiting for the Buddha's talk. In addition, there were eighty-thousand Bodhisattvas present.

Sakra-Devanam-Indra was present with twenty thousand gods. The four great Heavenly-King gods were pre-

sent with ten thousand gods, Freedom God with thirty thousand gods, and Brahman Heavenly-King who is the lord of the *Saha* World (the earth). Two thousand gods were attending to Brahman Heavenly-King. Also, there were eight dragon-kings accompanied by hundreds of thousands of attendants. Finally, there were four kimnara-kings, four gandharva-kings, four asura-kings, and four garuda-kings. They are kings who are half animal and half human being.

All of these people, gods, bodhisattvas, animals and non-human beings were surrounding the Buddha. King Ajatasatru of far away Magadha Kingdom was also present with his hundreds of thousands of attendants. They each worshipped the feet of the Buddha while holding their hands together in *gassho* and waiting for the World Honored One to speak.



大広目天王
West

大持国天王
East

大増長天王
South

大比婆門天王
North



大梵天王
Brahman Heavenly King

八大龍王
Eight Dragon-Kings

— Chapter 8 —

**AFTER REPENTING,
DEVOTION TO BUDDHA
ŚĀKYAMUNI**



Many years ago King Ajatasatru, deceived by Devadatta, tried to assassinate Buddha Śākyamuni. Not only did the king try to assassinate the Buddha, but he also tried to kill his father. After listening to the teachings of the Buddha, he repented his wrong doings. He realized his actions were stupid. He felt an obligation toward his parents and the Buddha. He began serving Buddha Śākyamuni. The king was strong and powerful. He defeated King Virudhaka, who had destroyed Kapilavastu (Śākyamuni Buddha's father's kingdom), and ruled most of the kingdoms in India.

— Chapter 9 —

STRANGE OCCURRENCE

At the center of Mount Sacred Eagle in India, Buddha Śākyamuni sat qui-

etly in meditation. His eyes were closed and his mouth was shut. He was motionless for a long time.

After some time, as rain began to fall, red and white lotus flower petals in varying sizes showered upon the Buddha and the congregation that gathered on the mountain. Everyone shouted, "What is going to happen?" Suddenly the earth shook in six different ways. It was not an earthquake. It was one of the expressions the gods in the universe made to show rejoicing. The earth shook up and down, side to side, and round and round. The congregation felt joyful.

Something important must be about to happen that might not ever happen again. It must be something the gods and deities of heaven and the earth could not help but express as joyfulness. Everyone present was astonished and rejoiced. They put their hands together in *gassho* and watched the Buddha. "What is He going to say?" "What teachings will He expound?"

Thereupon the congregation was shocked to see more strange occurrences. The Buddha emitted a ray of light from the white curls between His eyebrows. The light brightened the countries in the east. Listen well! The Buddha was at Sacred Mountain in



India. Can you guess what is to the East of India? The ray of Buddha Wisdom illuminated the east and even further!

— Chapter 10 —

**THE RAY ILLUMINATED
THE EAST**

Why did the ray illuminate the east? How far east did the ray travel? Surprisingly, it is said that the ray of light illuminated all the corners of eighteen thousand worlds in the east.

The ray of light reached down to the Avici Hell and up to the Akanistha Heaven, the highest heaven of each world. It illuminated all happy and sad people in the six realms of hell, hungry spirits, animals, *asuras* (evil and fearsome spirits), ordinary human beings and heaven. It showed both the good and bad people in the cycle of birth and death in these six realms. Those who behaved badly had ugly faces and were disliked by others. Those who had good behavior were cute, wise, and liked by many people.

Not only were people illuminated by the ray of light, but also the past Buddhas, who taught many Bodhisattvas in these worlds. These Buddhas were saving people who were suffering. The people who were saved looked peaceful and happy. The ray of light also illuminated these saved people erecting pagodas to give offerings to the past Buddhas in Pari-nirvana (final death). Thus, the congregation at Mount Sacred Eagle watched all these people: bodhisattvas, Buddhas and gods in all the corners of the eighteen thousand worlds in the east.