

Nichiren Shu News

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1

First International Lay Retreat 'Determined to Be Bodhisattvas of the Earth'

By Rev. Sensho Komukai
Missionary Department

The first International Nichiren Shu Lay Retreat was held from October 10 to 16, 2009. Twenty-seven Nichiren Shu practitioners, 19 women and eight men, from Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, England, USA and Canada participated in it. The purpose of the seminar was to help the lay-members who are devoted to Nichiren-shu Buddhism see more deeply what it means for them to be

members of Nichiren-shu. It is hoped that they will become better leaders among their sanghas.

Let us look at what the retreat meant to those participants in the words of our Founder, Nichiren Shonin states in his "Treatise on All Phenomena as Ultimate Reality (Shoho Jisso-sho)":

"If I am counted as one of the bodhisattvas that emerged from the earth, my disciples and followers too are among the rank of those bodhisattvas from the earth, are they not?"

The twenty-seven people who came to Japan all fervently wanted to be better disciples of Nichiren Shonin. They came all the way to Japan because they are eager to study, learn, experience, and feel Nichiren Shu Buddhism deeply. As Nichiren Shonin says, these people are like the bodhisattvas who emerged from the earth in the Lotus Sutra.

The Founder also states in this writing, "Becoming a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra is brought about by a long causal relationship

from the past. Even among trees and plants, some of them are carved into Buddhist statues because of their long karmic relationship."

While the participants were staying at Minobusan, they had the rare opportunity to join the mando (lantern) parade on October 12, as well as to attend the O-eshiki service commemorating the passing of Nichiren, and to visit our Founder's grave on October 13. The 13th day of October is the day when Nichiren Shonin passed away. How lucky they were to pay homage at the Founder's grave! No, they are not "lucky" according to the "Shoho Jisso-sho." They are the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra because of a very long causal relationship from the past. They visited the grave on the day that Nichiren passed away, not by chance but because of their karmic relationship with him and Nichiren Shu.

The Founder also declares, "All phenomena as ultimate reali-

ty" means that Buddhas show Buddhas' appearance, unenlightened people show their appearance, and the true appearance of all things is the truth of the Lotus Sutra."

They got up at 5 a.m. to attend the morning service at the Kuonji Temple. They read all of Chapter II of the Lotus Sutra. The fact of all phenomena as ultimate reality is taught in the second chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Was this a coincidence? No. They participated in the retreat, which means they are practitioners of the Lotus Sutra and they are determined to be bodhisattvas emerged from the earth. "There is no doubt that they have been disciples of the Original Sakyamuni Buddha from the remotest past," says Nichiren Shonin in the Shoho Jisso-sho.

It is stated also, "Tears keep falling when I think of the current unbearable hardships, but I cannot stop tears of joy when I think of obtaining Buddhahood in the future."

After visiting our Founder's grave, they went into the Joshoden (ever chanting) Hall to practice the Shodaigyo and to have the closing ceremony of the retreat. Many of them broke down in tears. On the one hand, they cried because they would be separated from one another in a few days, but the tears also fell from their eyes because of the joy they felt, chanting "Namu Myoho Renge Kyo" in front of our Founder's grave on the day honoring his death. Those tears could be called "tears of nectar."

The Founder also states, "Strive to carry out the two ways of practice and learning. Without practice and learning Buddhism will cease to exist. Endeavor yourself and cause others to practice these two ways of practice and learning, which stem from

faith. If possible, please spread even a word or phrase of the sutra to others."

During the retreat, they practiced and learned more of Nichiren Buddhism. They must have felt, in a way, like the bodhisattvas of the Lotus Sutra emerging from the earth. As the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra, as the bodhisattvas emerged from the earth, their role, upon returning to their home countries, is to "spread even a word or phrase of the sutra to others" and help them along the path of Buddhahood.

*All the sentences and phrases of Nichiren Shonin used in His treatise, "Shoho Jisso-sho" are taken from Volume 4 of the Writings of Nichiren Shonin compiled by Kyotsu Hori and published by the University of Hawaii Press in 2007.



The group led by Rev. Ken-itsu Saito, Director of the Missionary Department, visits the statue of Nichiren Shonin in Sado



Rev. Giko Tabata is giving a lecture at Minobusan



Participants join the mando parade at Minobusan



Participants and staff in front of the main hall of the Kuonji Temple

The Life of Sakyamuni Buddha (14)

By Rev. Shinkai Oikawa, Litt. D.

10. Sakyamuni's Missions and Entering Nirvana

(continued from (4) [No.174])

The Buddha sat alone, feeling Himself refreshed. He spent the night like this. When did Sakyamuni sleep then? If He did not sleep, He would break down.

As I told you last time, a night was divided into three parts of four hours each for 12 hours from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. ancient India. The first four hours were called "the first night." When you got married, you spent "the first night." It is called the memorable first night. "The first night" in Indian Buddhism means time from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. It was difficult to sleep at that time because He spent all the time giving His disciples some advice about their troubles and things to consult.

He slept for four hours from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. at "midnight" because He had to sleep for the sake of His health. And He did various things after a short sleep. Roughly speaking, He slept four hours at night and the rest was 20 hours. He continued to work almost 19 hours except for a short nap.

People all had to walk in the olden days. Sakyamuni walked all the way to the next place. The standard distance to walk a day is 10 km. This is called "Yojana" in Indian, or "yujun" in Japanese sutras, meaning 10 km. The Buddha continued to travel around 10 km a day and to save many people. Next I am going to tell you how He saved the people.

(5) A Tale of Anglimala

The Buddha guided numerous people by various means. In the case of a man named Anglimala, for example, he was an unhappy man studying Brahmanism. The wife of his teacher allured him while her husband was away. Anglimala flatly refused her saying, "Please do not be outrageous. I



Rev. Shinkai Oikawa

cannot do such a thing with the wife of my teacher." When her husband came home, she told him an utter lie saying that Anglimala had raped her. Her husband got angry, but could not punish Anglimala because his disciple was more excellent than himself in everything including physical strength and brain power.

Then he thought out an evil plan and said, "Anglimala, you have done very well. But if you want to finish the course perfectly, you have to do the last work. From now on, you go out into streets with this sword, kill people, cut off their fingers, make a necklace with one hundred fingers, and bring it to me. Then I will allow you to finish the complete course."

Anglimala was distressed. But he unwillingly decided to obey this order given by his teacher and began terrifying the whole town. The news reached Sakyamuni very soon. Ignoring His disciples' attempts to stop Him, Sakyamuni went to see Anglimala saying, "This is absolutely bad. We must stop him doing such a terrible thing immediately."

Anglimala ran after Sakyamuni to cut off His finger, thinking that a good game was approaching. However, he could not catch up with Him at all. Sakyamuni went far faster than he. Unable to catch up with Him, Angli-

mala called Him to stop. Sakyamuni said, "I am stopping." Although He stopped, the distance between Him and Anglimala never shortened. Sakyamuni asked Anglimala, "Why can't you catch up with me, though you are running? I am standing quietly." Anglimala said, "Why do you say that you are standing, though you are walking; and that I am not standing, though I am standing?"

Sakyamuni answered, "I have already abandoned any will to kill and hurt all animals or living things. I never have such a mind. So my heart is stopping or not moving. But you cannot control your mind to cut off their heads and take away their fingers whenever you see people. You are very eager to kill me quickly. I am just looking at you while you are saying, 'Stop! Stop!' Although you say, 'Stop! Stop!' to stop actually is that your heart stops. You do

not stop. It means that your heart does not stop."

Then Anglimala was astonished and regretted what he did, opening his spiritual eyes. He became a priest saying, "I have committed very inexcusable blunders. Please allow me to be your disciple." It was good that he became a priest. But a priest has to go about asking for alms. He has to ask for alms and food. The townspeople gave him a thorough thrashing, violently shouting, "You continued to kill our people and collect their fingers till yesterday. Today you are a priest, and look pious and praiseworthy."

Anglimala told Sakyamuni about the matter. Sakyamuni said to him, "There is nothing you can do but endure it entirely. Tolerate it without any complaint. You committed every evil corresponding with such reproach. You killed people. So you must endure it." He made such a severe order. Anglimala was said to endure the townspeople's violence and became a distinguished priest.

(Trans. by Rev. Kanshu Naito)
(to be continued)



Rev. Kanno Preaches (3)

"**Namu Myoho Renge-kyo, the daimoku, is the quintessence of the whole Lotus Sutra**"
(Myoho-ama Gozen Gohenji)

Let's chant the O-daimoku and start

On the other occasion, Nichiren Shonin states, "Speaking of the Lotus Sutra, when we hold it with our hands, our hands eventually become a Buddha; when we chant it, our mouth is nothing but a Buddha." (Ueno-ama Gozen Gohenji)

What would you say? Since the Lotus Sutra means the O-daimoku, the two above sentences express the same one teaching.

Even if we can comprehend the teaching, it is "not easy" to practice it.

Let me suggest a proposal. I take medicine three times a day. Each time I drink it down, I chant the O-

daimoku three times in my mind, praying "the medicine will duly play its own role." When I drive a car, I touch the amulet and chant the O-daimoku three times, praying "I shall not hurt others nor myself."

Every time I start eating, or when I visit the home of a person for the first time while on a journey, I chant the O-daimoku three times.

"Starting everything in life with the chanting of the O-daimoku three times" is what Nichiren Shonin is telling us as I perceive these words of the Founder.

(Rev. Nissho Kanno, head priest of the Kaichoji Temple, Shizuoka)

10th Anniversary of Dragon Palace Temple Commemorated

By Rev. Gakugyo Matsumoto

More than 4,000 local residents filled the precinct of the Dragon Palace Temple as the temple held the 10th anniversary service in the small Buddhist town of Nagpur, Maharashtra State, India, on November 2.

Held on the full moon day, the temple's main hall was closely packed with 500 devotees as Rev. Kansan Mochida, President of Nichiren-shu International Buddhist Fellowship Association and head priest of the Sogenji Temple, presided in the service to commemorate the 10th anniversary.



The main hall is fully packed with devotees



Ms. Sulekha Kumbare leads the "O-daimoku" chanting

occasion.

Preceding the 10th anniversary at Dragon Palace Temple, the group of Nichiren-shu International Buddhist Fellowship Association had visited the Busshi no kai Patan Dojo in Kathmandu, Nepal, and the Horinji Temple, Sarnath, India.

On November 4, the group visited

Mumbai and held a memorial service at the Gateway of India for the victims of the terrorist bombing at the Taj Mahal Palace on November 28, last year, and prayed for world peace.

The group also visited Five Sacred Places of Buddhism during the 12-day tour from October 25 to November 5.

(Tr. K. S.)



Members of the Nichiren-shu International Buddhist Fellowship Association in front of the O-mandala, Dragon Palace Temple

Nichiren Shonin and His Lay Followers (14)

By Rev. Kanji Tamura, Litt. D.
Associate Professor,
Rissho University

Myoshin-ni (Nun Myoshin) (2)

Donation in Memory of the Deceased: The lay-priest husband of Myoshin-ni, follower of Nichiren in Suruga Province (present Shizuoka Prefecture), died following a long illness. In the fifth month of 1280, Myoshin-ni sent various items of donation to Nichiren Shonin in memory of her late husband.

In response, the Founder wrote a letter of thanks, taking into consideration the status of Myoshin-ni, saying, "Despite the busy farming season (the fifth month of a year), when a labor shortage is your problem, you delivered to me various things. I do not know how to express my gratitude for your thoughtfulness."

This letter shows that the Myoshin-ni couple were in a position of governing farmers. It is presumed that the couple were the "shokan," in charge of the management of a manor (in medieval Japan), as it was the case of Nichiren Shonin's parents.

Then he praises her for making donations in memory of the deceased, declaring that her wish has reached her late husband. "It must sorely be intended to pray for the repose of your late husband in the next life, as it is hard for you to be separated from him. As you warmly pray for the repose of your late husband in the next life, how happy he must be!" says Nichiren Shonin.

Guessing how her husband feels, the Founder continues, "Your late husband under the shade of a tussock (in the grave), where nobody visits him, must be anxious to know how his young children left in the Saha World are doing." Thus the Founder speaks for the feelings of the couple which unite them beyond life and death in his



Rev. Kanji Tamura

letter.

Character 'Myo' Is a Messenger, Linking the Saha World and the World of Next Life: And Nichiren Shonin points out that the O-daimoku serves as the very messenger linking the couple beyond life and death. He tells her, "Nevertheless, because you always chant the O-daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, the character of myo of the Lotus Sutra transforms itself to be the messenger of the Buddha or such bodhisattvas as Manjusri, Samantabhadra, Superior Practice or Never Despising."

The Founder continues that the character of myo, performing as a carrier pigeon, reports the things in the Saha World to the other world. Reading this, Myoshin-ni's faith in the daimoku is

further strengthened.

Character 'Myo' Is Buddha Himself, Transforming Us into Buddhas: The Founder continues, "Also, the Chinese character myo is the character which transforms us (the unenlightened) into Buddhas just like a flower becomes a fruit or a half moon becomes a full moon. Therefore, it is preached in the Lotus Sutra, 'Beholding the Stupa of Many Treasures' chapter, 'He who is able to uphold this sutra is upholding the Buddha's body.' And Grand Master T'ien-t'ai declares, 'Every character of the Lotus Sutra represents the true Buddha.'"

Thus the character myo is Sakya-muni Buddha, Himself, endowed harmoniously with the 32 marks of physical excellence and 80 minor marks. However, as we are unenlightened and "our eyesight is not clear enough, we see it merely as a character," says Nichiren Shonin.

"For instance," he continues, "even

if a new shoot of a lotus flower sprouts in a pond, aged persons with poor eyesight are unable to find it. Even if there is a shadow, we cannot see it in the darkness of night." Thus, although we do not perceive it, the character of myo is exactly the Buddha's body, he stresses.

All the Merits Are Put Together into the Character 'Myo': Further expounding the meaning of the character myo, Nichiren Shonin states, "Also this character myo is the moon, sun, stars, mirrors, clothes, food, flowers, earth, and ocean. The merits of all of these are put together to become the character myo. Speaking of a treasure, it is the wish-fulfilling gem. Please understand it. Allow me to write to you again in detail." In the postscript, he instructs Nikko Shonin to explain the contents of the letter to Myoshin-ni.

Reading this letter, Myoshin-ni deepened her faith in the daimoku and kept on praying for the repose of her husband in the next life, and the happiness of her children in the future.

(Tr. K. S.)
(to be continued)



The Lotus Sutra with a Buddha Image Accompanying Each Character: In this national treasure of Japan, chapter I of the Lotus Sutra written on a scroll, an image of the Buddha accompanies each Chinese character. It is preserved in the Zentsuji Temple, Grand Head Temple of the Zentsuji Group of the Shingon Shu Buddhism in Kagawa Prefecture. Measuring 29.4 cm by 2,124.2 cm, it is believed to have been made in the middle of the Heian Period. The photo is by courtesy of the Zentsuji Temple



O-ESHIKI: Visitors to the Ikegami Hommonji Temple (photo) totaled about 300,000 in two days of October 12 and 13 this year. On October 12, the eve of our Founder's memorial day, 110 mando (10 thousand lanterns) floats marched into the temple in the evening. Nichiren Shonin, who left Minobusan on the eighth day of the ninth month, 1282, was bound for "Hitachi Springs" to take care of his health. He stopped at the mansion of Ikegami Munenaka, devoted follower, on the 18th day and passed away at around 8 a.m. on the 13th day of the 10th month in that mansion, now the site of the Ikegami Hommonji Temple.



ARAGYO (ascetic practice): participants of the traditional 100-day Aragyō ascetic practice total 129 this year. The photo shows the participants chanting sutras at the opening ceremony in the Main Hall of the Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple, Chiba on November 1. The practice winds up on February 10, 2010.

Robe-Change Rite Observed at Minobusan

A ceremony to mark the change of robe for the statue of the Founder was conducted at 6 p.m. on October 1 in the Founder's Hall of Minobusan. The ceremony was officiated by Chief Abbot Nissho Uchino of Minobusan. The Founder's winter robe was donated by Rev. Zuio Inoue, managing director of Minobusan. At the ceremony to mark the donation of the winter

robe, Chief Abbot Uchino told the congregation, "Nichiren Shonin expresses his sincere gratitude in his letter to his followers every time he receives robes, foods and other offerings from them. The Founder is especially thankful because of Minobusan's severe weather. The ceremony to mark the robe-change held in June and October is of great significance."

Prof. Yamazaki Elected as Rissho U. President

Professor Kazumi Yamazaki was elected 31st President of the Rissho University on October 25, succeeding Prof. Koki Takamura, who resigned due to the expiration of the term of office. The term of office of Prof. Yamazaki, now vice president of the university, starts on April 1, 2010 and lasts three years.

Born in 1947, he graduated from the master's course of the Faculty of Science and Technology of Waseda University, majoring in industrial management. He became a professor of the Department of Business Studies at the Rissho University in 1990.



Prof. Yamazaki

Memories and Reflections: the Dharma in Manhattan

By Rev. Myokei Barrett
Myokenji, Houston

This year marks the eighth anniversary of 9/11 and provides an opportunity to reflect upon everything that has occurred since that time. The ceremonies and memorial services held nationwide remind us that many still grieve and have great difficulty dealing with anger, hatred and fear. Others have determined to end war at all costs and continue to agitate for withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq.

Rev. Shogen Kumakura, resident minister of the Daiseionji Temple in New York remembers 9/11 well as he was in New York and the event marked a defining moment in his mission. That morning, Rev. Kumakura, who was employed as a driver, was on his way downtown carrying passen-



Individual toba with the name and age of the deceased

gers to the Financial Center across the street from the World Trade Center. Initially scheduled to depart the hotel at 8.15 a.m., the trip was delayed until 8.45 a.m. The first plane hit at 8.46 a.m. As he drove down the Westside Highway along the Hudson River from midtown to downtown, he noticed a fire but was unaware of the cause. About a quarter mile before reaching the WTC, all traffic was stopped and the police began to reroute all traffic uptown and the second plane hit the WTC. Rev. Kumakura noticed only that all emergency vehicles were traveling downtown along the Westside Highway and went back to the hotel still unaware of what had really happened until he was able to hear it on the radio. At that moment he understood the meaning of his presence in New York.

Since his arrival in New York (due to employment), Rev. Kumakura continuously questioned the reason for living in New York. He did not like New York and eventually was transferred to Boulder, Colorado. He went back to New York briefly and then returned to Boulder, where he remained for five years. In 1991, he met Rev. Join Inouye while in San Jose and was later able to meet his own master, Rev. Nissho Takeuchi of Myokenkakuji in Osaka, for the first time. His master revealed his plan for New York and asked Rev. Kumakura to take responsibility for New York

after completing his studies to become a minister. Rev. Kumakura went on to train and study in Japan and then in Los Angeles and completed his training to become a minister. After studying the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin's teachings, he found he no longer had a problem with living in New York, yet he still wondered why he was in New York.

As Rev. Kumakura was preparing to continue his journey to priesthood by attending Shingyo Dojo, the 9/11 event clarified his purpose in New York, which specifically told him to spread the Dharma for the healing of Manhattan. Manhattan was built on the burial grounds of numerous groups of people. One can deeply sense the negative karma and the sadness and grief resulting from the suffering of indigenous Americans over the theft of their land and death of their people, the enslavement of African slaves to work the land, and finally of all those who perished on 9/11 and their families. Rev. Kumakura came to understand that the Lotus Sutra was the perfect instrument for healing New York City.

Rev. Kumakura prepared toba for each of the 9/11 victims, not only those who perished that day but also others who may have perished from the toxic pollution released by the tragedy. He began to make ten toba each day and chanted the whole of Yohon in support. In August 2007, he



Rev. Kumakura at Battery Park

completed the last of 3006 toba, each of which is inscribed with the O-daimoku and the name and age of the person who died.

Any obstacles to spread the Dharma in New York thus far have been easily overcome through the power of the Dharma, right thinking, and Rev. Kumakura's pure heart toward his mission. As a result, this journey has reaffirmed Rev. Kumakura's desire to continue his mission to bring the power and energy of the Lotus Sutra to the healing of New York City and solidify the foundation of the Nichiren Order in America.



Temple Events

By Sandra Seki

HONOLULU

Pray for World Peace

The Mission prays for world peace everyday. As Buddhist priests, preaching compassion and respect are two important things that people should carry out. If there is compassion and respect for others there will be no war and world peace will be realized. Since last year, the State of Hawaii has started observing Peace Day. It is the first state to recognize this day.

President Obama made a speech in Prague and suggested a phase-down of nuclear weapons to approach world peace.

We at the mission have recently found a good documentary film called "Gate" to share the story of nuclear weapon disarmament recorded by a world peace organization called the Global Nuclear Disarmament Fund (<http://gndfund.org/index.html>). This film introduces people who are trying to realize world peace in a very peaceful way. It is not

an aggressive anti-war activity.

The mission has contacted the organization and the documentary was shown at the temple on three different days.

LAS VEGAS

Celebration for Sakyamuni Buddha

December 8 is the day Sakyamuni Buddha attained Enlightenment after six years of ascetic practice of self-denial. Siddhartha Gautama attained Enlightenment and became the Buddha. At the Kannonji Temple of Nevada a special service will be held on Sunday, December 20, from 10.30 a.m. to celebrate this important day. All attendees will offer candlelight to the Buddha. Since this will be the last Sunday service of the year, there will be a potluck luncheon after the service.

Please bring your favorite dish for five people.

New Year's Eve Service

The last service of the year will be held on New Year's Eve from 7.30 p.m. Apprecia-

tion is one of the best ways to be happy. Let us show our appreciation to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and our ancestors throughout the coming New Year. All attendees will get to hit the temple bell, though it is tiny, a total of 108 times indicating farewell to all our sufferings and hardships during the past year. Mrs. Kumiko Kanai will be serving soba, a symbol of longevity.

NEW ENGLAND SANGHA

Rev. Ryuoh Faulconer's goal is to spread the Dharma throughout the New England area. He has been continuing regular weekday and weekend services and also held several retreats throughout the year. In addition to these activities, he has been taking part in inter-faith services and community activities.

This summer the Sangha group helped in the Buddhist picnic held at the Nihonzan Myohoji Peace Pagoda at Leverett, Massachusetts. Also the group took part in the Boston

Lantern Festival where more than 5,000 people come every year. This event was derived from the Japanese Obon lantern floating tradition and began seven years ago. Rev. Faulconer chanted the Sutra and O-daimoku at this event.

In late summer a weekend retreat with the help of the NONA ministers was carried out, and members from throughout the U.S. practiced together and received training and guidance from the teachers.

Rev. Faulconer has also been active giving lectures on Buddhism at local universities and Haverhill High School. Groups of youths visit the temple to learn more about Buddhism.

The Sangha will participate in the 'First Night Celebration' held in cities throughout the U.S. on New Year's Eve to make the evening more than just a toast at midnight. Groups from other faiths: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Pagan and Hindu will all get together and pray for world peace and understanding.

TENNESSEE

The Lexington Nichiren Buddhist Community was not very active this past year since

Rev. Shinkyo Warner was away in Sante Fe, New Mexico for a year. While he was gone, members met in private homes to carry on their meetings. However, Rev. Warner has returned and will have meetings at a local center. Events with other Buddhist groups are being planned and for now the group meets on Sundays.

Events

October–November, 2009

- Oct. 1: Ceremony of changing clothes for the Statue of the Founder in the Founder's Hall at Minobusan
- Oct. 2: Docho: Initiation Ceremony at the Seichoji Temple
- Oct. 10: Service in memory of the Founder's exile to Sado Island
- Oct. 13: O-eshiki, the 728th Memorial Service for the Founder
- Oct. 10–Nov. 23: Exhibition, "Nichiren and Hokke Treasures," Kyoto National Museum
- Oct. 10–16: Int'l Lay Retreat at Minobu and Kyoto
- Nov. 1: Annual 100-day "aragyo" ascetic practice starts at the Nakayama Hokekyoji Temple, Chiba
- Nov. 3: Airing of the Shogyoden Hall at the Hokekyoji Temple, Nakayama, Chiba
- Nov. 5: 10th anniversary of the Dragon Palace Temple, Nagpur, India
- Nov. 11: Service in Memory of the Komatsubara Persecution
by Rev. Tsuoh Yokoi

Nichiren Shu News

c/o NICHIREN-SHU Shumuin

1-32-15, Ikegami, Ota-ku, Tokyo 146-8544, Japan Tel. 03-3751-7181~3

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