

Nichiren Shu News

Published by the Head Office of Nichiren Shu & NOPPA

No. 265

December 1, 2024

1

COMMEMORATING THE GRAND OPENING OF MYOSOKUZAN BUSSHINJI TEMPLE

By Pramod Danuddara

The first seeds for Myosokuzan Busshinji Temple were planted in 2013 after a deep connection was forged between Ms. Kalpani and Mr. Alexandar Ang in 2012. This online bond quickly blossomed into a physical reality when Rev. Kangyo Noda, Rev. Ervinna Myofu, and Mr. Ang visited Sri Lanka in December 2013. Under their guidance, the Nichiren Shu Buddhist Society of Sri Lanka was established on December 13, 2013. Since then, Sri Lankan members have been practicing with devotion.

In 2018, with the assistance of Mrs. Kumudu Senarath, our society was officially registered as the “Nichiren Shu Buddhist Society, Colombo.”

In 2019, with the generous donations from all, overseas Nichiren Shu members and priests, construction of Myosokuzan Busshinji Temple commenced. Thanks to the unwavering dedication and contributions of our members, the temple was completed in 2024.



On May 15, 2024, giving priority to the local Buddhist culture, an all-night pirth chanting ceremony (a Theravada tradition where protective verses are chanted to serve as safeguards against fear and illness) was conducted. The following day, with offering of alms to the Sangha, blessings were obtained for our association and members.

In late September this year, members from Southeast Asian temples (Penang-Ichinenji, Kuala Lumpur-Kannonji, Singapore-Daimokuji, Klang Sangha, and Jakarta-Rengeji), the U.S., and Japan all came to Sri Lanka to participate in the opening ceremony of the temple according to Japanese tradition.

Festivities started on September 28, under the guidance and with the help

of foreign members and priests. 150 families living in poverty received gifts of donated food.

On September 29, 2024, the newly constructed temple adorned with fresh flowers was opened under the leadership of Chief Administrator Eshin Tanaka. Following speeches by the chief priest

and the association's president, lunch was served for all of the attending members and invited guests.

In the evening, a party was held at a resort in Panadura for our members, foreign members, and visiting priests. The event commenced with a traditional 'Pooja dance' performed by some of the association's young female members. Afterwards, the association's president addressed the gathering, expressing gratitude for all the contributions and urging everyone to keep working for the betterment of the association and the temple.

Following the speeches from the priests, dinner was served. The party concluded with dances and songs performed by both local and foreign members, leaving everyone with unforgettable memories.

The opening ceremony for our new temple and the party were the culmination of years of dedication and hard work. This will remain in our hearts as a beautiful and unforgettable experience.



THE JOURNEY TO BUILD MYOSOKUZAN BUSSHINJI TEMPLE

By Kalpani Apsara, Temple Member Colombo, Sri Lanka

The altar of Myosokuzan Busshinji Temple was filled with beautiful flowers and various offerings from many people to the Buddha.

On this day, we held the opening ceremony for our temple, attended by our devotees and members visiting from various countries, as well as local and international priests.

With the help of many devotees from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, and America, as well as our monks, we were able to successfully conduct this opening ceremony for our temple.

I would like to share a little about our struggle and journey to realize the dream of building this temple in Sri Lanka. It all began 11 years ago. We first learned about Nichiren Shu through the internet. After that, we tried to connect with Nichiren Shu devotees in Penang. We reached out to Alexandar Ang and Rev. Kangyo Noda. After several communications, we decided to invite them to come to Sri Lanka.

On December 13, 2013, we held our first meeting, which was led by Rev. Noda, Rev. Ervinna Myofu, and Mr. Ang.

From the start, we felt a sense of closeness, not at all like we were meeting for the first time.

We listened to explanations about Nichiren Shu Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra, and Odaimoku, which made us feel very happy. We experienced a sense of freedom in practicing the traditions we were used to as Sri Lankans, as Buddhists, and now as followers of Nichiren Shonin. We felt a sense of harmony in everything, and we decided to become Nichiren Shu devotees.

Since joining, several priests from Nichiren Shu have regularly guided us.



They include Rev. Noda, Rev. Ervinna, Rev. Keiji Oshima, Rev. Yuon Ito, and others who have visited and provided helpful guidance to us.

We have also carried out many activities related to Nichiren Shu rituals and numerous social activities to help the community around us. Over time, the place we used for learning together, which was also the home of our chairman, Mr. Gemunu Ranasoora, became too small as the number of devotees here had grown. We discussed this with the priests who were assigned here at the time, and we started planning to build a temple.

With the help of many people, we were able to start temple construction in 2019. However, it was not easy. The COVID-19 pandemic and the economic downturn in Sri Lanka brought construction to a halt.

At the same time, we saw many people struggling to eat due to the worsening economic conditions in the country, so we started a food bank initiative to help the local community in a small way.

In 2022, we were finally able to resume construction for our temple. In addition, we were officially recognized as one of the Nichiren Shu temples outside Japan, located in Sri Lanka.

In June this year, we were able to hold a soft opening for our temple, inviting local Theravada monks to conduct blessings and prayers in the Sri Lankan tradition. The temple was given the name of Myosokuzan Busshinji, and we held the grand opening on September 29.

Our 11-year struggle was not easy. We faced many difficulties and challenges. All the devotees, both young and old, under the guidance of the Nichiren Shu priests who visited Sri Lanka and with support from devotees from various countries, we were finally able to establish this temple. This reflects the spirit taught by our teacher, Nichiren Shonin: *Itai Doshin*—though we are born in various forms, we all share the same heart and spirit.

We also realize that we cannot stop here. Our journey has only just begun. As mentioned in Chapter Seven of the Lotus Sutra, in the Parable of a Magic City, this temple is just a temporary achievement. We will not become complacent and will strive to spread the Dharma, helping more people connect with Odaimoku and engage in the practice of the Bodhisattva, as our goal is for everyone to reach enlightenment.

Thank you so much for all the support you have given us.

TRAINING FOR MASTER PRIESTS AT SEICHOJI TEMPLE

By Rev. Ho-on Kida

Three days of training for “On Being a Better Master” were held starting on September 9 at Seichoji Temple in Chiba Prefecture. As the number of Kokusai Fukyoshi, international missionaries, has increased, it is inevitable that those who aspire to become Nichiren Shu ministers under their guidance as masters will also increase.

Great familiarity with ceremonial manners, sutra chanting, sermon preaching, and doctrine is required to educate and train a disciple when you are a master. If you mistakenly learn the doctrine and service manners, wrong views and bad manners will be spread among your disciples. It is therefore critically important to reconfirm proper Nichiren Shu teachings and service manners for Kokusai Fukyoshi to not distort the teachings.

As a Buddhist master, what temperament or ability is needed to train



disciples? Great importance is placed on three factors in this seminar: the power of human nature, ability to understand Nichiren Shu doctrine, and comprehensive understanding of ceremonial manners.

Over the course of five lectures, the participant priests reviewed service manners and behaviors, folding methods for their robes, *shomyo* practice, and morning and evening service practices sharing the various roles.

As an assistant instructor, let me express my impressions of this seminar. First, I felt acutely how difficult it was to give a sermon or advice through an interpreter. It was challenging to determine when to stop in the middle of an explanation for an interpreter to translate or to figure out a simpler way to explain a delicate phrase.

Secondly, I was deeply moved to see how faithful the participant priests were and how we are tied emotionally to each other through Nichiren Shu practice no matter what nationality we are. In every morning and evening service, each of the 17 participants (from the U.S., Indonesia, Germany, Italy, India, Brazil, and Britain) conducted a service in his or her own language. I do not understand their languages, but their solemn attitude toward the services and their majestic utterance of prayers, sutra readings, and Odaimoku chanting in their clear voices truly inspired me. Their deep faith was evident.

Early in the morning on the last day, they spontaneously walked up the hill called Asahi-ga-mori to chant the Odaimoku. As sunshine made a brief appearance during their chanting,

they all looked delighted. They fully understood the importance of seeing the sun at Seichoji Temple, where Nichiren Shonin first chanted the Odaimoku.

Their sincere faith and pure passion made me realize that these Kokusai Fukyoshi are training harder to improve their skills than most Nichiren Shu priests in Japan would have thought. They take great care not to let themselves fall into habits of making arbitrary decisions or distorting ideas in preaching. With this in mind, we really should think carefully about how Kokusai Fukyoshi study and training can be improved in the future.

Furthermore, this training left me with some doubt. I wonder if it is only the Kokusai Fukyoshi who need to participate in the master priest training?

I think that perhaps priests in Japan could learn a thing or two from these Kokusai Fukyoshi.

During the training, one phrase in English really struck me quite deeply, that is, “Perfect Circle.” A circle literally means a round plane figure. Like the full moon, nothing is missing. In Nichiren Shu Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra is the perfect teaching. A circle also means a group of people with a shared profession, interests or acquaintances. The Kokusai Fukyoshi are obviously a group sharing the same faith and a true passion for spreading Nichiren Shu Buddhism. I am sure that this circle of priests must be all united in one mind.

TRAINING TO BECOME A BETTER MASTER

By Rev. Shoda Kanai

Ministers from all over the world gathered at Seichoji Temple at Mt. Kiyosumi in early September for a three-day, two-night training session on how to be a better master. Five instructors from all over Japan helped in leading our group of Kokusai Fukyoshi to become better masters. As Rev. Keisho Adami expressed, “To be a master is really difficult, and it’s a role that cannot be overlooked. It needs a lot of skills and experience.”

The first lecture started with words from master Nanyue, “Once upon a time, we had an opportunity to hear the Lotus Sutra at the same place. Thanks to this connection we are gathered here now again.” Because of this connection, we came together here to better ourselves in becoming better versions of ourselves and become more like the Buddha.

A question was asked to everyone, “What kind of image is perceived as being a priest?” The three ideas that were put forth were, “Being a good listener, having compassion, and being kind.” What was interesting was the same question was asked in the Yomiuri Newspaper to their readers, and the replies came back, “chants well, well clothed and well behaved, and has a smiling face.” This was an interesting comparison of how we as priests see ourselves vs. how people see priests. How do we reconcile the two? Can we remove all of the illusions between us and them.

Even though there are labels of how a minister should be, the best course of action is to be someone that is willing

to help quickly in any situation. It is what is inside us, what motivates us, that is more important than our outward appearance. As Rev. Myoan Katayama from India summed it up, “I was able to reconfirm the most important thing during the lecture and practice. That is, don’t get caught up in appearance (form), move with a faithful heart.”

In the second lecture, we discussed our thoughts on Nichiren Shonin and his image. There is actual evidence that Nichiren Shonin may have been as large as he looks in various depictions. He left a fingerprint on a Gohonzon, and it clearly shows he had a large hand.

We can also look at Nichiren and emulate the type of person he was, but it is more important to have his spirit of compassion with his vow to bear the suffering of others. It is taking the aspect of, “Someone who can help me help others.” I don’t have the power, but I can receive the power from Buddha and Nichiren to help those who are suffering. We don’t have to strive to be the greatest and most noble. Rather, we should strive to be the most thankful and helpful. This is what makes a good master.

The third lecture was interesting as we now graded how we view ourselves as disciples from one (lowest) to ten (highest). It was interesting to hear from everyone and their opinion regarding how well they thought of themselves and how they could improve. Rev. Yotatsu Chiamulera from Brazil stated, “The most impactful aspect for me was participating in this seminar for the first time, side by side with my own master and other priests whom I also regard as my masters. I am deeply grateful to all of them. Having the opportunity to be in the same room is a tremendous honor and privilege. I hope to continue their work and honor everything I have learned from each of them.”

Understanding ourselves as disciples will help lead us to become better masters as we find the balance between being confident and being humble. We can tilt in either direction, being overconfident or overly humble. To find the middle takes deep reflection and having faith in oneself.

Besides the lectures and classes on *shomyo* (rituals), everyone had a chance to conduct service in their own manner

and native language. As English is the most prevalent, it was interesting to hear invocation and prayer chanted in Italian, Portuguese, and Indonesian. To hear chanting in other languages helped support the point that we are spreading the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren to all corners of the world.

This was a good time to reaffirm our pledge as ministers. Rev. Chiamulera remarked, “I feel that this place holds significant meaning for this seminar, as it is where Nichiren Shonin first developed his relationship as a master with disciples—a legacy that remains alive to this day. It was here that he made his vows, first as a monk and later to propagate the Odaimoku. This gives profound meaning to my second chance to make vows at Seichoji and to commit myself to becoming a good missionary and master.”

Just before the end of the seminar, each participant was asked to write a letter to a future disciple expressing our goals and what was required from the disciple. After offering to the altar, to Shakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Shonin, we received the letter back to be placed on our altars until the time is ready to be revealed. Then a dedication ceremony was held for the newest Kokusai Fukyoshi trainees, Rev. Keisho Adami (Italy), Rev. Yotatsu Chiamulera (Brazil), Rev. Ryoen Drewello (U.S.), and Rev. Kanse Capon (U.K.). We wish them success in furthering Nichiren Shu in their respective areas.

As we further expand overseas propagation, we are grateful for the special training received to better ourselves and benefit our sanghas.



STUDY CLASS ON THE LOTUS SUTRA AND NICHIREN SHONIN'S TEACHINGS



The Buddha creates a magic city to encourage you never to give up the Way to attaining Buddhahood.

The Seven Great Parables in the Lotus Sutra (5): "The Parable of a Magic City"

By Rev. Kosei Uchida

In Chapter 7 of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha tells another parable called, "A Magic City."

Once upon a time there was a dangerous and wickedly long road. Many people wished to use this road to reach a place of treasures. They were led by a man, clever, wise and well-informed of the conditions of this dangerous road. He led them on this path, but halfway the people got tired of walking, saying, "We cannot go a step further. Our destination is still far away. We wish to go back."

Hearing this, the leader thought, "What a pity! They wish to go back without discovering great treasures." Instead of giving up, he expediently created a city by magic at some distance from the starting point of this dangerous road. He said to them, "Do not be afraid! Do not go back! Look at the city over there. You can stay in that great city, and do anything you like for relaxation. You will be peaceful." Thereupon, the worn-out people had great joy. They said, "We have never had such joy as this before. Now we shall be able to get off this wicked road and become peaceful."

Then, they made their way forward and entered the magic city. They felt peaceful, thinking that they had already passed through the bad road. Seeing that they had enough rest and relieved

their fatigue, the leader caused the city to disappear, and said to them, "Now the place of treasures is near. I made this city by magic in order to give you a rest."

The Buddha is like the leader. Why did He create an illusionary city? Because if people were told the True Way to Buddhahood is too long to pass through and great efforts are needed for a long time, they would have given up trying to attain Buddhahood. The Buddha knows that people are weak and timid. To give people a rest, He created a magic city.

When something good unexpectedly happens to you when you continue to have faith in the Lotus Sutra, please be reminded of this parable of "A Magic City." The merits you received are not your final purpose. Your goal is still a long way to go. The Buddha gives you some merits or rewards in order for us not to abandon the effort and continue to practice towards Buddhahood.

In Chapter 7, "The Parable of a Magic City," there is a famous phrase as follows, "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!"

Once you reach the True Bodhi, your next role is to save other people. Do not be satisfied with your own salvation. Help others in suffering out of your compassion and lead them to attain Buddhahood. Such a message is put in the text of the sutra.

Open Your Eyes (3): A Message to his Disciples and Followers

Rev. Sensho Komukai

When you read "Open Your Eyes," you will find Nichiren's enthusiasm everywhere in the text.

How precious it is to be a true practitioner of the Lotus Sutra and to lead the way in spreading the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Age of Degeneration are shown in every word, every letter of the treatise. What the Lotus Sutra says is all in accordance with his life. What is predicted in the Lotus Sutra has all come true with him. He was deeply pleased, because his strenuous efforts were not for nothing. This is why the more hardships he faced, the more delighted he felt.

Unfortunately, the original of "Open Your Eyes" was destroyed in the great fire at Minobusan Kuonji Temple in 1875. Someone who had seen the original treatise said that his brush strokes are bigger and more vigorous than usual. When you read "Open Your Eyes," you will not only learn what he meant but also be impressed by his enthusiasm.

In this treatise, Nichiren Shonin firmly made what have become known as "the three great vows." He wrote, "No matter how I am abandoned by gods and how much difficulty I encounter, I will uphold the Lotus Sutra at the cost of my own life.... No matter what happens, abandoning the Lotus Sutra will cause us to be plunged into hell. I have made a great vow.... I will never break my vow to become the pillar of Japan, to become the eyes of Japan, and to become a great vessel for Japan."

He declared his firm resolve in these vows: "I will not yield to any temptation or intimidation. I will keep my faith in my life. I will hold up this country. I will lead the people to the Way of Buddhahood. I will offer a helping hand to those who are hovering on the ocean of spiritual darkness."

These vows were not only for himself but also to set a good example for his disciples and followers to keep their faith in the Lotus Sutra.

The Lotus Sutra says in Chapter 14, "Celestial pages will serve you. You will not be struck with swords or sticks. You will not be poisoned." You may think, "Then, why do we have to suffer persecution even though we keep a firm faith in the Lotus Sutra? Why not just receive divine protection?" You are quite right. But please understand that the persecution will give you a great opportunity to plant and cultivate seeds for attaining Buddhahood. Those who spread the Lotus Sutra will be protected eventually, but they will be persecuted first. You cannot yield to the persecution. Do not mourn your fate. Do not doubt whether you will be protected or not.

It also says in Chapter 5, "You become peaceful in your present lives. In your future lives, you will have rebirths in good places." You may think that you are suffering many hardships and that what is said in the Lotus Sutra is inconsistent. But for those who acquire an ability to get them over and open up a new way through the Lotus Sutra teachings, there cannot be any problems. As a proverb says, "Adversity is the parent of virtue." Those who think any difficulties can resource materials for practicing the right Way to attain Buddhahood and who believe themselves to become a Buddha in the future will have a peaceful mind even in these disastrous situations.

He wrote "Open Your Eyes" to leave his conviction for all Nichiren Shu followers, hoping that his disciples and followers, including ministers and lay people in his time, as well as future generations, would overcome hardships and work to spread the Lotus Sutra throughout the world. The Lotus Sutra tells you that if you keep your faith in the Sutra, whatever troubles may fall upon you, you will attain Buddhahood in the future. Therefore, it is important to continue to practice the Way towards Buddhahood even though you are now a common mortal. "Open Your Eyes" encourages you to keep confidence in your faith in the Lotus Sutra.



Nichiro Shonin, who was often considered to be Nichiren Shonin's best disciple, always accompanied Nichiren Shonin and never gave up his faith in the Lotus Sutra.

LOTUS JEWELS

It is the same with the truth of the Lotus Sutra. As metal can cut trees and grass, and water has the virtue of extinguishing all fires, the Lotus Sutra is equipped with the virtue of enabling all living beings to become Buddhas.

—Nichiren Shonin, Letter to Horen, Horen-sho (ST 175)

It may seem like the Lotus Sutra works mysteriously, or worse that we cannot rely on it to benefit ourselves and all beings. Nichiren shows us that even though we may not know how the Lotus Sutra works, we can still rely on it just as we rely on the everyday things we use in our lives. If we are cold, we put on more clothes or move to somewhere warm. If we are thirsty, we find something to drink. If we need to cut something we use a knife. If we want to see the world as it is and help all beings to become enlightened, we chant *Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*.

—Rev. Shinkyō Warner

PILGRIMAGE TO SODOJI IN XI'AN AND MT. TIANTAI

Twenty pilgrims led by Honorable Rev. Nichiyu Mochida visited Sodoji Temple in Xi'an and Mt. Tiantai from June 24 to June 28.

On the first day, they flew to Hangzhou Xianshan International Airport, as their flight to Xi'an Xianyang International Airport was delayed due to severe weather. The delegation ceremony was held in a conference room at the Hyatt Hotel in Hangzhou.

On the second day, the group split into two, with around half heading to Sodoji for a memorial service and chanting the Lotus Sutra, while the other half headed to meet with the chairman of the Shaanxi Buddhist Association at Daikozenji Temple.

The first group visited Sodoji, which was built by Yao Xing, one of the Later Qin emperors and known as the place where Master Kumarajiva translated many sutras, including the Lotus Sutra.

It was once dilapidated, but through the Master Kumarajiva Honoring Association, which was established with Nichiren Shu's recognition and cooperation, the temple was able to dedicate a statue of Kumarajiva to his memorial hall in 1992. The Nichiren Shu International Buddhist Association also built a stone monument commemorating the 28 chapters of the Lotus Sutra in 2007 and contributed to the building fund for a sutra preservation tower. During the memorial service, they chanted the entire Lotus Sutra, splitting the eight fascicles into three, and concluded with a kito blessing.

The second group went to visit Daikozenji, an Esoteric Buddhist temple that was one of three major temples where many sutras were originally translated into Chinese.

On behalf of Honorable Rev. Mochida, Rev. Gyoho Uchiyama, Rev. Hokyū

Saito, and Rev. Jikei Matsumoto visited Daikozenji to meet Rev. Huixu, the chief priest of Daikozenji and the chairman of Shaanxi Buddhist Association and Rev. Puzheng, Deputy secretary general of Buddhist Association of China.

On the third day, four members including the Honorable Rev. Mochida visited Daijionji Temple in Xi'an, relating to Xuanzang, a well-known sutra translator. Giant Wild Goose Pagoda, built by Xuanzang to hold sutras brought from India, is a symbolic existence.

Other members went to the Terracotta Warrior Museum. The Terracotta Army is made up of clay figurines of warriors and horses buried in the mausoleum of the first Qin emperor to protect him in his afterlife.

After the group reconvened, they were to travel next to Mt. Tiantai, but due to a flight delay, they arrived at the hotel after midnight.

Mt. Tiantai is the birthplace of the Tendai Sect where Tendai Daishi Chigi (Zhiyi) established his doctrine. This place is sacred for many Japanese and Korean Buddhists.

On the fourth day, everyone participated in the morning service held in the Mahavira Hall, Guoqing Temple. About 80 priests chanted the Shurangama Sutra, Great Compassion Dharani, Ten Shorter Dharani, and the Heart Sutra with unique intonation.

With a warm welcome by Rev. Yunguan, they worshipped at Rain Flower Hall, Mahavira Hall, Nichiren Hall, and Repaying Gratitude Tower, which was built in 1869.

After the service, they headed to their last destination, Venerable Master Zhiyi Pagoda, which is also his mausoleum (he died on November 24, 597).

On the final day, everyone flew back to Japan, completing this pilgrimage.



Calendar for December 2024–January 2025

DEC 8 Jodo-e (Enlightenment Day) commemorating the day when the Buddha attained Enlightenment

DEC 31 New Year's Eve Service; Bell Ringing Ceremony held throughout Japan

JAN 1 Memorial Day for Nichiji Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin

JAN 13 Minobusan Opening Ceremony for the New Year at Kuonji Temple.

JAN 21 Memorial Day for Nichiro Shonin, one of the six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin

Nichiren Shu News c/o The Head Office of Nichiren Shu, 1-32-15 Ikegami, Ota-ku, Tokyo 146-8544, Japan; Tel. +81-3-3751-7181. *Nichiren Shu News* is published by the Nichiren Shu Overseas Propagation Promotion Association (NOPPA) and the Head Office of Nichiren Shu.

Editorial Board Sensho Komukai, *Editor*, Shoda Kanai, *Assistant Editor*, Kosei Uchida, *Staff Writer*, Yuon Ito, *Advisor*.

Managing Editor Kanjo Bassett **Art Director** Alan Rowe

If you have comments, questions or story ideas, please contact us at editor-nichirensunews@nichiren.or.jp or use the QR code.



日蓮宗
Nichiren Shu

©Copyright 2024 Nichiren Shu.
All rights reserved.