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SACRED WORDS

All Buddha Sakyamuni's deeds before his Enlightenment and all virtues after his Enlightenment are manifested in the five characters of MYO-HO-REN-GE-KYO. Therefore once we chant these five characters, we shall be naturally endowed with all the deeds and virtues of the Buddha.

Nichiren, *Kanjin Honzon Sho*

Buddhist Flag

By Rev. Shokai Kanai

In the past, several people contacted the Kannon Temple of Nevada inquiring about Sunday service. After I gave them the time and location, they said that they would come for sure; however, only a few would show up. I wondered if they were looking for a temple building, and since there was no temple building, only a residential house, they might hesitate to come in.

In order to show, "This is the place where the Buddha lives," I have placed a Buddhist flag since last April in front of the house as shown in the picture. Today I would like to explain the meaning of the Buddhist flag.

The flag was jointly designed by Mr. J.R. de Silva and Colonel Henry S. Olcott to mark the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon in 1880. It was accepted as the International Buddhist Flag by the 1952 World Buddhist Congress held in present Sri Lanka.

The flag has five colors: blue, yellow, red, white, and tan.

BLUE represents Buddha's hair color. I have never seen real blue hair, but when Buddha's statue is made, the hair is always painted blue. This symbolizes Buddha Wisdom.

YELLOW represents Buddha's skin color. Many people think that Sakyamuni Buddha was Asian; however, his ancestors were Indo-European who came from the north to the warmer south to settle in Northern India. Yellow is similar to gold. Buddha statues are often painted in a golden color. Gold or yellow is bright, so it symbolizes Buddha's teachings shining everywhere.

RED represents Buddha's blood. His blood is filled with enthusiasm to save all living beings. It also symbolizes Buddha's Compassion.

WHITE represents Buddha's teeth. When he talked white teeth were shown. It also symbolizes the teachings that the Buddha is pure.

TAN is the color of the Buddha's *kesa* or a robe worn over his left shoulder. This symbolizes patience to overcome any insult, seduction and persecutions against him.

In the picture you may also notice the *O'Daimoku* (NA-MU-MYO-HO-REN-GE-KYO) banner. The Nichiren Buddhist Order of North America made it to promote the Nichiren Shu Campaign for Planting Buddha Seed through the *O'Daimoku*. All temples and churches of NONA hang the banner outside so that any strangers will read the characters and plant the seeds of Enlightenment in their mind. Some day in the future the seeds will sprout and grow into a big tree of Buddhahood or gain the insight of the Eternal Buddha. I am very glad many ministers have called me for additional banners. More surprisingly a person from Japan said that he would donate the banners not only for the original 20 banners but also for any additional ones. This is very fortunate!

Thus, the Buddhist flag and the O'Daimoku banner indicate that this is the place the Buddha lives and the place to practice Buddha Dharma.

AUTUMN

By Rev. Shoda Douglas Kanai

It is already September. How time flies! I cannot believe summer is over, and it is back to school time for children. The daylight hours are slowly shrinking and the temperature is becoming more bearable. As we transition to autumn, we are in a time of change. No longer are plants growing but are starting to wither. Animals are preparing for the long winter. We too, should also take a moment to stop and review what is important in our lives.

The current recession and uncertainty is causing lots of distress and panic. Many people are losing their jobs thus cannot spend freely as in the past. Could this have been prevented? Maybe, but in most cases not. Change is inevitable. This is one of the Buddha's most important teachings. When we hold on to the past and cling to our desires, then we are building the foundation for increased suffering. Our minds become clouded and confused. Desire becomes stronger when we lose what we previously enjoyed, falsely chasing pleasure for happiness. This cycle continues until it consumes us. Many evils will fall upon us as we circle in the whirlpool of suffering.

How do we break away from suffering? It is easy to say that ignorance is the cause of suffering and to remove the suffering is to follow the Eight Fold Path of Right Understanding, Purpose, Speech, Conduct, Livelihood, Endeavor, Thought and Meditation. We know what we need to do, but how? We are still human thus we are still apt to have strong desires and attachment to things.

First, we must recognize that change will happen and will continue to happen. A dozen roses are beautiful in sight and smell. After a couple of days, they begin to wilt and after week the petals are gone and the stems are starting to decompose. The roses cannot stay beautiful forever. Enjoy the moment for it will not last. So as we, must view the

world in the moment and when that moment is gone, let it go. There will be other moments in the future.

Second and maybe the most difficult is introspection. We are afraid when we look inside to see who we really are. We do not want to believe we are shallow, vengeful and selfish. Without knowing the true nature of ourselves, we cannot make changes to correct that behavior. It is as if we are in a tunnel. All that we can see is the far off light at the end. The rest is dark walls. It is when we emerge from the tunnel that we can see the rest of the world. When we realize that we are not living or behaving according to Buddhist principles, we can see things for what they truly are.

Third, is practice. When we understand that change is constant and know our nature, then we must continually be mindful of our actions and control our desires. The mind is very powerful. It is the engine that controls our every motion and emotion. It is only when we are calm that we can be at peace; without suffering. Meditation helps calm the mind, but also chanting the Odaimoku and doing Shodaigyo will bring about greater benefits than mediation alone. The Odaimoku is the embodiment of the Dharma, all of the Buddha's teaching. By chanting the Odaimoku, we are encapsulating the Dharma within us to help us dispel ignorance.

As the summer slowly fades away, we too should fade away our attachments to material objects and live a simpler life. No longer will we live in the past, but for the present. As we do so, the world will become a happier place.

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