Shinnyo

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Shinnyo-en to Conduct Its First Fire and Water Ceremony in Africa

Religious leaders from all over the world and local Kenyan communities collaborate in ancient ceremony of spiritual awakening

February 27, 2012, Tachikawa, Japan -- Shinnyo-en (http://www.shinnyoen.org), the Buddhist denomination in which all people regardless of age, gender, nationality, or religious background can cultivate the innate kernel of enlightenment existing in all beings, announced today it will conduct a fire and water ritual at the edge of the Great Rift Valley - the cradle of humanity - in northern Kenya.

The 90-minute ceremony will be conducted on Sunday, March 4, 2012, 10:00 AM EST (3:00 PM GMT, 6:00 PM Kenya, 12:00 midnight Tokyo) at Ol ari Nyiro, the nature preserve of the Gallmann Memorial Foundation / Gallmann Africa Conservancy (http://www.gallmannkenya.org). The ceremony may be viewed live, online, at http://www.media-server.com/m/p/8nhtau2u.

The ceremony is part of the 10th anniversary conference of the Global Peace Initiative of Women (http://www.gpiw.org), Awakening the Healing Heart, to be held March 2 - 6, 2012 in Nairobi and Laikipia. Over 300 religious and spiritual leaders from all over the world will attend and participate.

The ancient Japanese esoteric Buddhist ceremony of spiritual awakening has been adapted by Her Holiness Shinso Ito, Head Priest of Shinnyo-en (http://www.shinnyoen.org/her-holiness.shinso-ito.html), to include participation and contributions from Kenyan musicians, dancers, and tribal elders, members of the Njemp, Pokot, Samburu, Kikuyu, and Turkana communities. The ceremony will be conducted under the direction of the Gallmann Memorial Foundation with an international array of artists, including the famous Kenyan singer, Hellen Akoth; Nikos Lagousakos, choreographer of the Zurich Ballet; Benedict Cantatore and Richard Good of the U.K. charity, social enterprise, and cultural center, The Eden Project; and British theatrical designers from Wildworks Theatre, Pete Hill, Tom Barnecut, Hal Silvester and Antonia Atha.
Shinnyo-en Fire and Water Ceremonies

The contemporary Shinnyo-en fire and water ceremony has been conducted by Her Holiness Shinso Ito, Head Priest of Shinnyo-en, several times in various locations around the world.

- The ceremony is based on an ancient fire ritual, called a homa, performed in various forms in Hindu, Tibetan and Japanese Buddhist, Jain, and other traditions.
- The homa ritual was incorporated into Buddhism as a means to enhance people’s aspiration for enlightenment.

While most traditional Buddhist homa rituals focus on personal purification and awakening, the Shinnyo-en ceremony is dedicated to awakening people to their innate compassionate and altruistic nature, transcending all boundaries of age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and religious tradition, and directing the positive energy of the ceremony outward with the hope that all people can live in a world of hope and harmony. The ceremony, therefore, is meant not just for some personal benefit, but deeply to inspire compassion - for all life forms, past, present, and future as well as to empower altruistic actions that benefit others. The Shinnyo-en ceremony is designed to be an impetus both for personal spiritual awakening but also for selfless, courageous action.

The Shinnyo-en fire and water ceremony provides:

- An intimate, personalized experience - an opportunity to reflect with gratitude in one’s own ways and words on the specific people who have helped and supported you through your life
- A communal experience - an opportunity to concentrate on these feelings of gratitude with other people, demonstrating a common, human experience of interconnectedness and relationships that transcends age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and religious tradition
- A beautiful and solemn event comprised of abstract symbolic images and actions that are expressed in unique elements of a locality of holding ceremony, yet that are universal, transcending local, specific cultural and religious traditions
- An opportunity to have a spiritual experience complementary to or separate from one’s personal religious tradition

The universal symbolism of fire and water has been compelling to people from many different religious, faith, and ethnic communities. Shinnyo-en develops each ceremony with characteristics that appeal to the audience and setting:

- Abstract and universally symbolic and suggestive images and gestures
- High aesthetic standards in all details of the ceremony - imagery, music, performance, light, etc.
Shinnyo-en to Conduct Ceremony in Africa
February 27, 2012

- Incorporation of local cultural elements, responsive to the location and setting of the ceremony
- Respect to local traditions and those of Shinnyo Buddhism - with the use of contemporary and innovative expressions of essential elements of such traditions.

**About Shinnyo-en** ([http://www.shinnyoen.org](http://www.shinnyoen.org))

Shinnyo-en is a Buddhist denomination originally established in Japan and with members today throughout the world. Shinnyo-en is, first and foremost, a place for Buddhist training, in which all people regardless of age, gender, nationality, or religious background can cultivate their innate buddha nature, the kernel of enlightenment existing in all beings. Shinnyo-en Buddhism is differentiated by its teachings drawn from the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, by its deep roots in ancient esoteric Buddhist practices, and by its distinctive form of meditative training, called sesshin. Shinnyo-en conducts unique fire and water ceremonies, based on the ancient homa rituals, several times each year at significant places around the world. Shinnyo-en’s ceremony, Lantern Floating Hawai’i, has been conducted in Honolulu since 1998, and is the largest Buddhist ceremony regularly held outside of Asia, with an audience annually exceeding 40,000 people.

The first Shinnyo-en temple was consecrated in 1938, led by Master Shinjo Ito (1906-1989), who had trained at the Daigoji Monastery, the Shingon temple in Kyoto, Japan (founded 843 CE), one of the historic centers of Japanese esoteric Buddhism. Recognized as an acharya in 1943, Master Shinjo was authorized to establish his own dharma lineage, which became the contemporary Shinnyo-en. Headquartered in Tachikawa, Japan, Shinnyo-en has temples throughout Japan and in other countries, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia, Brazil, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle). The current Head Priest of Shinnyo-en is Her Holiness Shinso Ito, the first woman ever to officiate at a Buddhist ceremony at the Daigoji Monastery in the 1,100 year history of the temple, an origin of Japanese esoteric Buddhist practice.

**About the Global Peace Initiative of Women** ([http://www.gpiw.org](http://www.gpiw.org))

The Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW) was founded to help awaken and mobilize spiritual energies in places of great need with the goal of aiding in healing and unifying the world community. GPIW facilitates this by seeking to gather together those of great insight, wisdom, compassion and dedication, many of whom are working quietly for the upliftment of the world. A major focus of GPIW’s work is to aid in building a global network of contemplative leaders who through their inner work can help transform the causes and conditions that lead to suffering at both the individual and collective level.

GPIW organized the conference, “Awakening the Healing Heart: Transforming Communities through Love and Compassion” on the occasion of its 10th anniversary since its founding at the Palais des Nations in Geneva in 2002 with the support of former UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan. The conference, to be held at the United Nations Environmental Programme Nairobi Headquarters and at the Gallmann Nature Conservancy, celebrates the women and men from around the world who are healing their communities through the feminine model of love and forgiveness.
About the Gallmann Africa Conservancy (gallmannkenya.org)

Conference host: The Gallmann Africa Conservancy is a non-profit charitable organization active in Ol ari Nyiro, West Laikipia, Northern Kenya. The conservancy was created by Kuki Gallmann to honour the memory of Paolo Gallmann and Emanuele Pirri-Gallmann -her husband and son- who both died tragically in Africa, and are buried in Ol ari Nyiro.

The Gallmann Africa Conservancy will in perpetuity endorse its mission statement which promotes coexistence of people and nature in Africa through harmonizing the protection and the creative sustainable and ecological utilization of the natural resources. The conservancy aims to make of Ol ari Nyiro an example of this conservation principle and a monument to nature. In addition to environmental protection, anti-poaching, biodiversity, wildlife, educational, cultural and artistic projects, the conservancy is active in reconciliation, peace and sport gatherings, and poverty alleviation through job creation, and public health care, and has built and equipped a model local clinic and health center, schools and laboratories, constructed/ donated roads, water reservoirs, offices, solar systems and posho mills for the neighbors, hey bales to pastoralists, and provides bursaries and scholarships to secondary schools.