

Coming to terms with Buddhism

“Let’s Increase Our Happy Time!”

~Studying the Dharma~

When you are asked “Are you happy now?” do you think you will answer “Of course” with confidence? Or, will you hesitate to answer so?

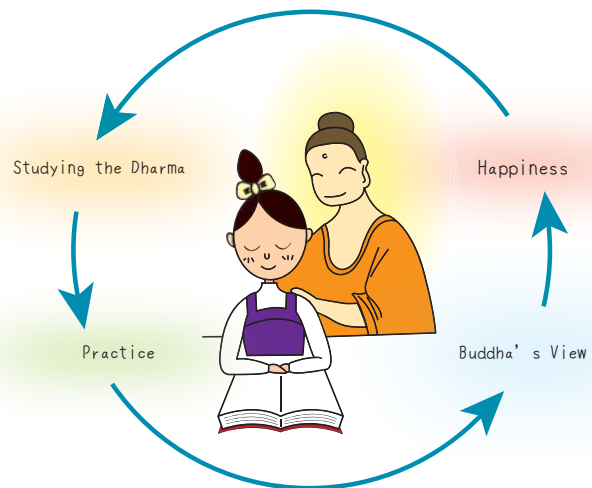
There are many types of happiness. For example, you may feel happy when you enjoy a compliment, receive a gift from someone or win a lottery. These are all kinds of “happiness.” However, even though these things could make you happy, that happiness will be just temporary. We would like to introduce the way to keep your happiness forever in your hearts! It is to absorb the Buddha’s perspective in our lives. It is not something that can be done easily, but if you wish to see with the Buddha’s perspective, we should understand what the teachings of the Buddha are and make them a part of us.

The teaching of the Buddha teaches us how to be happy. We can learn the teaching of the Buddha everybody at any age, regardless of educational background and no matter how good we are at studying.

However, there is a difference between learning the Buddha’s teaching and studying at school to get better scores on tests. Just like as studying the night before a test, even if you get a good score on the test at that

time, you may not be able to keep what you learned for long. On the other hand, it is possible to acquire the Buddha’s teachings if you learn and practice them. The more you deepen your learning and practice of the teachings, the more you can change your perspective to the Buddha’s view. We call “studying the Dharma” the whole process of learning the Buddha’s teachings, understanding the real intention of the teachings, bringing them into our daily lives and repeatedly practicing in order to make them a part of us.

Happiness lies all around us. It is up to each of us whether we can find it or not. Just take my word for it and enjoy studying the Buddha’s teaching and experience that it feels like. We introduced the way to be happy this month. Why don’t you try it with your friends now?



Cultivate the Buddhist Heart Online

Risho Kosei-kai International of North America (RKINA) has begun a 10-week course on the study of Basic Buddhism in English.

This course is conducted through the internet, allowing interactive learning from the comfort of one’s home. This course is not limited to Risho Kosei-kai members; rather the intention is to spread the wonderful teachings of Risho Kosei-kai far and wide throughout the world. Kris Ladusau is the instructor of this course, and there are various teaching materials available through the computer to support the advance of this course.

For information on participation fees, methods, and details, please contact RKINA. Tel: +1-949-336-4430 Email: info@buddhistcenter-rkina.org

Difficult Economic Times

President of Rissho Kosei-kai Nichiko Niwano

Accepting Our Situation

The global economic downturn, said by experts to be the worst in a century, has had a direct influence on Japan's deteriorating economic situation. As conditions worsen a growing number of people are expressing anxiety about their future, especially those who have lost their jobs or face cuts in their wages.

If we only take a negative view of such lean times, however, we can do nothing to change our circumstances. Rather, it is precisely in such hard times that it becomes important for us to view our daily lives in the light of the Buddha's teaching.

The Japan of days gone by seems very distant indeed from today's material abundance. We might say that back then, many ordinary people faced economic difficulties on a daily basis, often having to struggle to obtain sufficient food. Even so, people helped each other out, and led their lives with consideration for others. In the family, parents and children were united in their efforts to confront their challenges and thus shared their happiness when they were successful, strengthening the bonds between them. In other words, in one sense the prevalent poverty encouraged stronger ties between people, helping to create warm social relationships.

There are many ways to deal with the situation we face today. We can take a pessimistic and negative view, or we can accept it positively, with gratitude in our hearts. How we come to terms with our situation will determine whether we lead a happy life or an unhappy one.

A Great Opportunity

The teachings of the Buddha show us how to see things and how to accept them.

For instance, someone who thinks the tasks he or she is given at work are boring and feels they are unfair and unfulfilling, and someone who takes assigned tasks seriously and thinks they are important, achieve very different results and are evaluated differently.

Furthermore, when we are let go by a company, it is only natural that we feel uncertainty about what the future holds for us, but we could see that being released by a company provides us with possibilities for demonstrating creativity in the opportunity to start something new. In this way, when we accept our situation with a positive attitude and a feeling of gratitude, new worlds open up for us one after another.

When we encounter something demanding and say that it



is difficult, what we mean by difficulty is that it is hard for us to stay unaffected by the changing circumstances around us. In fact, however, we are being provided a great opportunity to undertake positive change in ourselves.

There is an old saying, "Even if you are in tight pinch, you will get through." This means that when we are really perplexed and cannot find a way out, that is when we can find the key that unlocks the path before us. The saying is an adapted form of a verse from the I Ching (Book of Change), "When you are in genuine difficulty, the situation surrounding you will change. When such change occurs, you will be able to get through." In other words, what really matters most in difficult times is that we free ourselves from our previous way of seeing things, because in the process of changing our point of view we can find a way out of our predicament.

Many Japanese people often quote the saying "Joy can be found in the midst of suffering." This means that such joy as is found in suffering can be considered real joy.

I think that we are taught the same thing by the symbolism of the lotus that grows in muddy water but blossoms into a beautiful flower. The mud, in other words, represents our feelings of pain and sadness, from which our hearts can produce the happiness represented by the beautiful lotus blossom.

Since we are now living in difficult economic times, let us strive all the more to transmit the light of the Dharma and help a beautiful flower blossom in the hearts of many people.

In the Footsteps of the Founder

KAISO-SAMA NI NARAITE

President-designate of Rissho Kosei-kai **Kosho Niwano**

The following begins a new series of English translations from the Japanese-language book *Kaiso-sama ni Naraite* (In the Footsteps of the Founder) by Rev. Kosho Niwano, president-designate of Rissho Kosei-kai. This series continues for the next one year.

Seeing Things as They Are: Recognizing the Ultimate Reality

"The Buddha's wisdom is the wisdom that sees things as they really are. When I speak of seeing things as they really are, I mean seeing the essence of things, undistracted by what changes, shifts, or varies. That is, seeing the ultimate reality of things and correctly perceiving them as whole entities, without taking a biased or one-sided view."

(San Reizan Meiso [Meditations of Three Holy Mountains], p. 14)

Founder Nikkyo Niwano was fond of saying "Things are all right just the way they are." By this he did not mean, "Accept your present situation even if it makes you suffer," or "Do nothing, just leave things the way they are." What he meant was, "The people around you and the events you experience will certainly reveal the working of the Buddha if you see them with the eyes of the Buddha's wisdom."

"In the Buddha's eyes, there is no world in the ten directions that is not the Land of Tranquil Light. But because we see these worlds through the eyes of ignorance, they appear to be filled with delusion and uncleanness. Changing this world into the Land of Tranquil Light necessitates changing the way we human beings see and think about things."

**(Shinshaku Hokke Sambu-kyo [New Commentary of the Threefold Lotus Sutra],
Vol. 5, p. 313-14)**

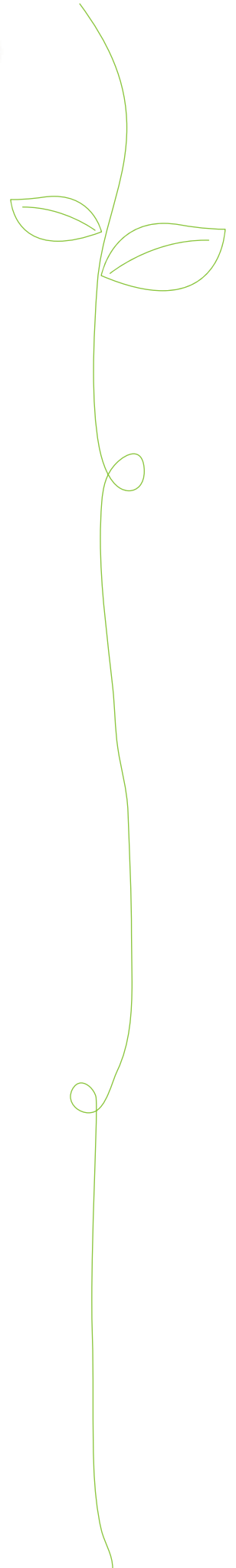
Every person has his or her own set of personal values. Thus, there is an infinite variety in the way that phenomena are perceived and understood. Such values are almost always based on perceptions of good and bad, profit and loss, personal circumstances, likes and dislikes, or other elements of common sense or personal ways of thinking.

What happens, however, when we view the world, in the founder's words, with the eyes of the Buddha's wisdom?

"We should make use of our defilements or desires in a positive way, rather than being obsessed with escaping from them, so that we can bring a lively energy to our world and create harmony in it. That is the wisdom of the Buddha."

**(Niwano Nikkyo Howa Senshu [Selected Sermons of Nikkyo Niwano],
special volume, p. 86)**

Once there was a young mother who always strove to attain her ideal of being a good daughter-in-law, a good wife, and a good mother. The baby boy she had been blessed with was sickly, however, and whenever she was having a particularly difficult time, the baby's



health became worse.

"I am trying so hard every day, why is this happening to me? What will people say about me?" Such thoughts constantly clouded her mind. More than anything else, however, she worried about how long her son would be able to live, and was always uneasy.

When her worries were at their peak was when the baby would begin to run a high fever again. All this made her wonder if she needed to reflect on her lack of sufficient gratitude to her parents. She had always acted with the sincere intention of being as dutiful as possible to her parents, however, and could not think of how she might have disappointed them. With no improvement in her satisfaction in sight and full of worry, she approached the founder, asking, "What can I do to keep my baby son from running these fevers?"

At this the founder said, "Let's see---let me hold your baby for a minute."

He took the infant in his arms and held him for a while. Gently stroking the baby's head, he said, "Well, well, you're a good little boy. So this is how you're bringing up Mommy."

To the young mother he added, "I think you now realize how much you are indebted to your parents for raising you." And that was all.

"Those who make the effort to put into practice their faith in the Eternal Original Buddha become able to see the Eternal Original Buddha and hear his teaching in everything they perceive and everything they experience."

(Niwano Nikkyo Howa Senshu [Selected Sermons of Nikkyo Niwano], special volume, p. 58)

"The ultimate reality of all things means that in their form as they are all things demonstrate their maximum abilities at the present time."

(Kosei, August 1953, p. 9)

The mother had come to the founder determined to accept any degree of stern advice if it meant finding a way to make her baby well, and she felt somewhat let down by the founder's mild reaction.

Even so, she found herself thinking, "So, that is it. That is what parents have to do. We have to experience all sorts of difficulties to raise our children." Merely coming to this realization, however, did not bring down her infant son's fever. She still had to keep rushing the child to the hospital on frequent occasions.

"If all human beings are able to see things as they really are, with the eye of the perfect wisdom of the Buddha, this world will become the Land of Tranquil Light here and now."

(Shinshaku Hokke Sambu-kyo [New Commentary of the Threefold Lotus Sutra], Vol.5 p.314)

In the course of these repeated alarms, however, something gradually dawned on her.

"If my child's time has come, it will come even if the doctor is right there. So let me do my best to help my baby regain his health with love and tender care now while I can. Let me live each day they way the Buddha would want me to do. That will be enough. It is all that I can do."

We often consider faith as something that will free us from our difficulties and torments. We start out assuming that such suffering should not exist. Most things usually do not work out exactly as we would like, so we think, "This is not the way I wanted this to be. I wanted it to be like this." The result is more suffering. But the founder taught us that suffering is a message from the Buddha, so we should gain realization from it.

"The Buddha eye refers to the way of viewing things comprehensively, synthesizing all other ways of seeing things. The Buddha eye not only sees clearly the ultimate reality of all things in the universe but also watches over them all with compassion."

President-designate Kosho Niwano

President Nichiko Niwano's oldest daughter, Rev. Kosho Niwano was born in Tokyo. After graduating with a degree in Law from Gakushuin University, she studied at Gakurin Seminary, the training institution for Rissho Kosei-kai leaders. Presently, as she studies the Lotus Sutra, she continues to act as President-designate, making speeches for participants in the main ceremonies of Rissho Kosei-kai, and handling activities for interfaith cooperation at home and abroad. Married to Rev. Munehiro Niwano. Mother of one son and three daughters.



**(Shinshaku Hokke Sambu-kyo [New Commentary of the Threefold Lotus Sutra],
Vol. 4 p. 40)**

The wisdom of the Buddha is wisdom that sees things as they really are. And it is wisdom that makes the best of things as they really are. If we can discover the working of the Buddha's compassion not only in the midst of good times, but also in the midst of painful events, then the present moment will always be meaningful and valuable to us. I cannot help but feel very strongly that this is the secret of where true happiness lies.

It might be difficult to discover the working of the Buddha in every situation. If, however, you accustom yourself to raising your heart's antenna to pick up that signal and continually do your best to feel joy in every moment, your wisdom will be enriched and strengthened. To develop the wisdom to make the most of each present moment is the reason that we are living.

"The most important thing is 'eyes that can see.' In today's world, Japan has the potential to become heaven as well as the potential to turn into hell. I think we can say that which occurs, which will develop, depends on the point of view we take. The bodhisattva Kannon is said to be the 'Regarder of the Cries of the World.' When the bodhisattva 'regards' the world, it is with vision that can see the heart, right through to the ultimate reality. As we strive to see the ultimate reality of this world, I think that we will find that the key to making this world a pure and heavenly land lies hidden in that very act of striving."

(Yakushin, January 1978, p. 13)

My journey to experience the World of Faith

Ms. Rie Sumada, Rissho Kosei-kai Hawaii

This spiritual experience was delivered as part of the ceremony of 50th Anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai Hawaii at the Dharma Center of Hawaii, on 22 March, 2009. We will present this in a series of 2 installments.

In the summer of 2008, with Rev. Hosoyama's blessing, I attended the First Dharma Training for English Leaders held in Japan. Twelve sangha from six different countries joined together and during the two-week training, I was blessed with much awareness that decided the direction of my life. In Suganuma, at Founder Niwano's birth house, we did the first-ever English Sutra recitation at the family altar. During the recitation, Founder Niwano's divine wish to spread the Dharma internationally kept coming to my mind. I knew then that I wanted to dedicate the remainder of my life to take parts in the international missionary.

Back in Hawaii, a harder challenge was waiting for me. The divorce procedure had begun. Since I had no income at that time, I was worried about my and my children's lives after the divorce. Rev. Hosoyama's guidance continued to be about my faith in the Buddha's work. Trusting that every occurrence is the Buddha's manifestation, I chose to face this process alone, without a lawyer. It was extremely scary to face the possibility that I might lose everything, but I also knew that if I didn't step out of my habitual sense of value, I could never see the Land of Faith. I simply accepted whatever the offer that was made to me without arguing. Over the next three months, while the procedure lasted, I took salvation in reciting the Threefold Lotus Sutra, asking the Buddha for my strength to jump over the gulch Rev. Hosoyama had so passionately described. At the end, I was awarded more than what I had asked for.

One and a half years ago, my marriage was shattered, my trust was betrayed, and I was so afraid of losing everything in my life. Today my marriage is still shattered, my trust still betrayed, but instead of losing everything, I was given so much more. Who would imagine, one and a half years ago, that such day of gratitude would ever come to me? Along the way, I was blessed with Rev. Hosoyama's as well as many sangha's support, and today, I am grateful for my life that is sustained and blessed by the Eternal Buddha.

Last summer, a few weeks after my telephone call to thank my mother, she was diagnosed with the Stage-4 cancer. She was given several months to live. I was shocked first, but soon filled with a wholesome gratitude to the Buddha. I was grateful to the Buddha for letting me make it in time, to thank my mother before it was too late. I was grateful to the Buddha for letting me make it in time, to turn my life around before it was too late. And most of all, I was grateful to the Buddha for

letting me become a person who could see his work even in hardships. And that was the Dharma's merit in the true sense. I have found that the true happiness exists in a person who can live life positively no matter what happens because he or she has the unconditional faith in the Eternal Buddha. And Rissho Kosei Kai is the place where we can learn just that.

Preparing this testimonial speech was an opportunity for me to look deep inside of my heart. I found that I still hold on to some negative emotions. I hope that, by practicing the Buddha way, one day I could change them into gratitude also. My walk with the Buddha has just begun, and there should be more challenges coming my way. But now, I know that I will look at them in a different light.

I have a dream now. I want to make my house as a gathering place where people with sufferings and challenges could get together, support each other, and learn from the Buddha's and Founder's teachings. If I could help even one person see the Buddha's light in his or her challenges, just as I was helped, I have reciprocated a tiny fraction of what the Buddha had blessed me with.

Lastly, but not least, I would like to thank Rev. Ozaki and many other senior members of Rissho Kosei Kai Hawaii for building the foundation of our church. Their devotion made today's celebration possible.

Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, Founder Niwano, thank you very much.

President Niwano, thank you very much,

Rev. Hosoyama, thank you very much,

Members of sangha, thank you very much,

And Ladies and gentlemen of the audience thank you very much for the opportunity to share my story. (The End)



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2009

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