



# Enjoy Walking the Way

President of Rissho Kosei-kai Nichiko Niwano

## The Buddha Way in Today's World

In Rissho Kosei-kai we are now carrying out the installation of an icon of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni and the Dharma Titles of Founder Nikkyo Niwano and Cofounder Myoko Naganuma at the home altar of each member. We are doing this out of our wish that everyone lead a joyful and meaningful life, as explained in our guiding principle of dissemination activity.

The Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, in whom we take refuge as Buddhists, can be understood as the great Life of the cosmos, original life. And as we all spring from that one source, we can even say that we have a parent-child relationship with the Eternal Buddha. After installing as the focus of devotion an icon of the Eternal Buddha symbolizing this parent, through our daily prayer offerings we deepen our faith and recognize the oneness of all living beings and the Buddha (this is the truth that living beings and the Buddha inherently have the same nature). This causes our joy in leading a life we are sustained to live to grow still more.

In addition, when we install the Dharma titles of the founder and cofounder who transmitted the Buddha's teaching to us, we demonstrate our attitude to our faith, how we look up to them as our revered teachers and move to increase our diligence.

The essential point of the installation is that through that ritual we are invoking the Buddha to abide in our home altar and preach the Dharma to us. In this sense, the invocation by all members of the focus of devotion and the Dharma titles at their home altars means that in our minds we can "hear" the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni's voiceless preaching of the Dharma, that we walk the Buddha Way in today's world with the founder and the cofounder as our guides.

## Putting Our Hearts and Minds in Good Order

As we complete the enshrinement of the focus of devotion and the Dharma titles, we find that our hearts and minds also come into good order. We begin to be able to savor in our daily lives our gratitude and joy at being caused to live, our discontents and dissatisfactions disappear, our hearts are peaceful and our minds at ease. I have heard that some families who did not used to offer prayerful reverence before their family altar begin to make offerings on a regular basis following the enshrinement.

We are able to share the joy and gratitude of all members following the installation and then talk with other mem-



bers about it. I think in this way our plan for all members to conduct the installation can progress, and the number of happy families leading lives centered on the home altar will surely increase.

## Enjoy Being Together

At the beginning of this year, I suggested, "Through the pleasant study of the Dharma let us lead lives filled with gratitude and happiness." Study of the Dharma means forming the habit of using the Buddha's measuring stick to view things, and putting it into practice in our daily lives.

As the Analects of Confucius say, "Knowing something does not equate with liking the object. And liking something does not equate with enjoying the object." In this case, "knowing" means knowing something intuitively; "liking" is taking one step beyond that through the person's personality and emotions, advancing to the next level, taking an interest in the object. "Enjoying" is one step further beyond that, grasping the essence of the object with the power of our reasoning. When we grasp things rationally, we are no longer alone; we become capable of enjoying being with other people, and we feel their sorrows and their suffering as if it were our own, like true bodhisattvas. Through our study of the Dharma we become aware of the many mysteries in the midst of things that we used to take for granted and think of as nothing out of the ordinary, and in turn our feeling of gratitude intensifies. In the last half of this year, let us enjoy walking the Way through our study of the Dharma.

# *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.

## Making the Best Use of Everything: Awareness of Our Value in Having Been Given Life

**"One thing I greatly value in the Lotus Sutra is its logic of making the best of every opportunity."**

(*Hosshin* [Raising Aspirations], July 1990, p. 16)

Founder Niwano used to meet difficult problems head-on and with verve, saying, "Now things are becoming interesting."

When something unpleasant happens or we are suffering irksome interpersonal relations, we are quick to think, "Did I do something wrong? Why do I have to go through this?" We do this even though we are supposed to be aware that all things happen through the divine arrangements of the Buddha for the purpose of giving us happiness in life.

Of course, everything always happens for a reason. However, the viewpoint of the Buddha toward problems differs from our own viewpoint. That is, the way the Buddha sees things appears to be only slightly different from the way we see them, but that slight difference makes all the difference in the way the world is perceived and evolves.

**"This is what Shakyamuni called a good friend. He said that someone who is your exact opposite is your good friend, in fact, your best friend. That is the approach, and it is one that changes your thinking. The source of this teaching is the Lotus Sutra."**

(*Niwano Nikkyo Howa Senshu* [Selected Sermons of Nikkyo Niwano], vol. 4, p. 146)

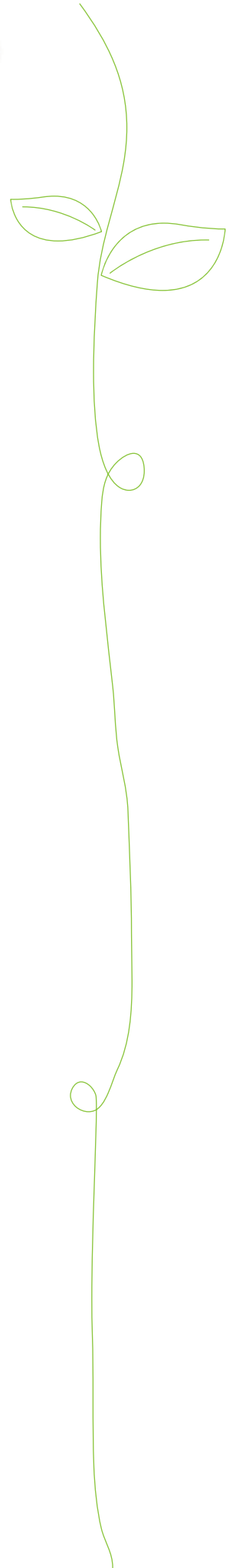
When something unpleasant happens or you meet someone you do not like, it is important to think about the reasons for your unhappiness or dislike, reflect on causes that may be within yourself, and try to change them. This process takes time, however, and it seldom imparts immediate joy or energy for living.

**"When you see people in this world as being good or bad, nothing ever seems to please you, and nothing ever seems to be helpful to you. However, an attitude that regards every person as an ally and is prepared to live and let live is the attitude of the Buddha. Whether they are good or evil, everyone must eventually find happiness. In this concept lies the greatness of the Lotus Sutra."**

(*Niwano Nikkyo Howa Senshu* [Selected Sermons of Nikkyo Niwano], vol. 4, p. 146)

There once was a man who had agreed to be the guarantor for the loan of a friend. Almost immediately it developed that his friend could not repay the loan and so he found himself saddled with the debt.

He realized he did have a legal responsibility in the matter, and went to apologize and ask for more time, but he really had no idea what to do about the situation; he was distraught.



## 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.



Everything turned around 180 degrees thanks to a comment from the founder, who said, "You have been given the opportunity to do something good. You should be grateful for the chance to gain merit. Even if it is for something like a debt, the act of humbling yourself to others is one of respecting others and worshipping their buddha-nature, and thus constitutes bodhisattva practice. So you can feel at ease and consider dealing with the debt as a way for you to attain buddhahood."

The man realized that what he considered as only a humiliation was a way of progressing on the Buddha Way, and completely changed his attitude---he had discovered value in the very act of humbling himself. With this, something he had considered as an onerous duty was transformed into something he was pleased to do for the sake of attaining buddhahood.

To humble oneself as a kind of religious training to make up for a customary lack of humility somehow misses the real point, however.

From the Buddha's viewpoint of making the best use of every opportunity, problems occur in order to lead us to fulfill the goal of performing bodhisattva practice. From the viewpoint of the Buddha's world, rather than seek the reason why problems occur, we should look for their purpose.

**"When we become aware of the worth of our being alive and being given life, we should not shortchange ourselves, but live our lives for all they are worth."**

**(*San Reizan Meiso* [Meditations of Three Holy Mountains], p. 23)**

If only we can recognize the true worth of what is happening right now, even problems we have been considering as painful will change into issues we need to deal with in order to attain happiness, and thus are occurring through the arrangements of the Buddha.

We have been born in order to achieve joy. We came into this world holding the ticket to happiness---our buddha-nature. We have the same spirit as the Buddha; all we need to do is become aware of it, make it manifest, and share that warm-hearted spirit with each other. This is why in life we meet various people, and why various things happen to us.

When we become aware of our value in having been given life here and now, we can discover true happiness and become able to experience it. This empowers us to live full and forward-looking lives.

# Merit Obtained Through Sutra Recitation

Ms. Wu Shu Ying, Rissho Kosei-kai of Tainan

This personal testimonial was shared during the Ceremony for the Anniversary of Shakyamuni Buddha's entrance into Nirvana, which was held at the Tainan Dharma Center. This will be presented in a series of two installments.

It has been 12 years since I became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai. Although many years have passed since I initially joined, I first became aware of the true meaning of membership only five years ago, when I received the role of the Area Leader. Previously, I had not attended the Dharma Center often; when I did attend, I would simply join in sutra recitation or chat with other members. I had not attended enough events at the Dharma Center to have a real understanding of the teaching.

When I first received the role of Area Leader, I felt a great deal of pressure. At the time I seriously wanted to avoid such responsibility, but I gradually got used to the role thanks to the guidance and cooperation of Sangha members, other Area Leaders, and sub-Area Leaders.

Through experiences at the Dharma Center and by interacting with others, I was able to learn many things; gradually I came to feel closer to the Buddha. I came to see the importance of putting the teaching into practice, and to understand that my development would be limited if I judged things only in terms of my personal likes and dislikes.

Last year my awareness grew at a more rapid pace than in all my years of membership. My father passed away last October 4th. When he died, my three siblings and I performed sutra recitation beside him in the intensive care unit. We continued to read the sutra for about eight hours after his death. I was so sad when he died, but sutra recitation gradually provided me with some relief from my sorrow. I began to think of my father, and how he would smile when he would tell jokes. My brother felt how wonderful Rissho Kosei-kai's sutra recitation is, even though he belongs to another Buddhist denomination.

In the first seven days after my father's death, I recited the Threefold Lotus Sutra, wishing to transfer the merit of the recitation to my father with the hope that he will be able to attain buddhahood. During the recitation, Sangha members kindly visited my father's altar and recited the sutra with me. I felt the Sangha's deep consideration and warmth.

A month later, I had an opportunity to join *the Segaki service*\* at Mt. Fo Guang Shan in Takao, Taiwan. I participated with the intention to hold devotionals to my father and my ancestors. The service lasted a week. My family and I joined the sutra recitation for four days. As the service wound down, I noticed that people around us were watching something in the western sky. I heard someone say "There are several clouds in the sky that look like lotus flowers." Then

we looked up and saw many pink clouds in the sky. However, the clouds dissipated quickly.

My husband said that many elliptical-shaped clouds appeared above the Great Buddha statue on Mt. Fo Guang Shan, and my sister also saw them. However, no matter how hard I tried, I could not find them. I could not accept this, and I thought, "How could they find such a mysterious phenomenon even they have no faith in any religion? And why couldn't I see anything, even though I have devotedly recited the sutra every day?" Since then, as I think about this, I have come to realize that this was merciful guidance given by the Buddha. The Buddha guides each of us in accordance with our individual nature. I realized that the Buddha undoubtedly guides non-religious people through uncommon phenomena, and teaches religious people the importance of practice, regardless of what they encounter.

Now when I think of that time four years ago, when I had just received the role of Area Leader, my desires came true. For example, when I thought to share the teaching with someone, curiously some reference would appear that explained the points that I was explaining, or a Buddhist book I needed would turn up in my hand. I recognized these occurrences are all arranged by the compassion and encouragement of the Buddha. (to be continued)

\* *The Segaki service* – a ritual of Buddhism; traditionally performed to stop the suffering of the gaki, ghosts tormented by insatiable hunger. Alternatively, the ritual forces the gaki to return to their portion of hell or keeps the spirits of the dead from falling into the realm of the gaki. Today, the ceremony also gives participants an opportunity to remember those who have died and to symbolically sever ties with past sins.



Ms. Wu (Left) receives the Certification of Family Education Training Program

# A Wordless Model

My grandfather used to always be on the run, helping anyone in the village who was suffering from illness and so on, even though he was busy with his field work. Of course, he did this as a free service. When I saw him, I would wonder about this, even though I was just a child.

Because my family was not particularly wealthy, I thought that my grandfather could not afford to neglect his family and be concerned about only others. But people whose illnesses or injuries were treated would come to thank him with crops taken from their fields, after they had completed the first stage of their field work. Upon seeing how happy they looked, I gradually came to understand

# The Teaching of Founder Nikkyo Niwano

how pleasant it was to do good deeds for others.

There are many kinds of joy, but I suppose we have few opportunities to really learn that the most joyful thing is to devote oneself to others. In particular, I think children nowadays do not have the privilege of learning such lessons. As a result, I cannot help but to appreciate my grandfather anew. Even in these times, I think it is important for parents to set a good personal example for their children, not just by their words, but by their actions.

From "Kaisozuikan 3" (Kosei Publishing Co.) P48-49  
Translated by Rissho Kosei-kai International

## \*\*\* Column \*\*\*

In considering the further dissemination of the Dharma, without objection one of the most important aspects is developing individuals. For any organization, whether it grows or not depends ultimately on whether or not there are genuine individuals within that organization.

Still, it takes time to develop individuals. Of course, the patience and passion of leaders is indispensable, however, just as important are the mutual spiritual elements shared between the one developing others and the one who is being developed. The first of such elements is "Impression" and "Inspiration." If the impression or inspiration one feels when encountering the Dharma or a teacher is great, so will

be one's degree of development. The next element is "Gratitude." If the mind of gratitude is deep, we can receive the protection of the Eternal Buddha. Next is the "Spirit of Seeking the Way." If human beings do not seek the way, they will not desire to develop themselves in the first place. Then there is "Repaying One's Blessings." If we don't value the debt of gratitude we have for the Buddha, the Founder, the President, as well as those who have guided us, we cannot become genuine believers.

Rissho Kosei-kai International have up until now done our very best to develop individuals, and we will continue to do so from now on as well. (Kotaro Suzuki)

## Rissho Kosei-kai

Rissho Kosei-kai is a lay Buddhist organization whose holy scripture is the Threefold Lotus Sutra. It was established by Founder Nikkyo Niwano and Co-founder Myoko Naganuma in 1938. This organization is composed of ordinary men and women who have faith in the Buddha and strive to enrich their spirituality by applying his teachings to their daily lives. At both the local community and international levels, we, under the guidance of the President Nichiko Niwano are very active in promoting peace and well-being through altruistic activities and cooperation with other organizations.



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