

Coming to terms with Buddhism

“Hoza”

~ An Innovative Community ~

Rissho kosei-kai has an innovative opportunity of liberating members, through the Buddha's teachings, from all the problems they encounter. We sit in a circle, with a leader called the Hoza Facilitator, in the center. This is called Hoza, and it is said to be the life of Rissho kosei-kai.

You may suppose, “Why should it be the life of Rissho Kosei-kai? What an important-sounding phrase! Don't people just talk about their problems while the Hoza Facilitator gives them advice?” But a second look confirms that what happens in actually very unique, and quite interesting. The real key to Hoza is the fact that one seeking consultation is surrounded by a number of trusted friends.

Usually, the bigger your problems are, the less likely you are to talk to others about them. And you may feel even more ashamed to discuss such personal things in front of a large group of people! But by having the courage to do it, the Buddha will give you a helping hand. The more you create a barrier between yourself and the world around you, the more likely it is you will not find real happiness. But through breaking this barrier and sharing your problems with others, you will lighten your burden, and will make real strides toward solutions you could never find by yourself. Such an attitude shows that you have a natural heart and mind! You will be able to put your actions into effect with the freshness and flexibility of a newborn baby's mind.

That is why you solve your problems much more quickly this way than you do it alone! Once you declare in front of others that you will do your best, you will be compelled to do just that!

And members sitting together in the Hoza circle also develop a gentle mind and heart, by praying for the happiness of asking for help, and by kindly consulting with them. Their problems will naturally lead you to examine your own heart. For example, you may become aware of a mistake you made unconsciously, and you will become more self-aware.

Through such impression received at the warm “mutual liberation circle,” you can have a great mind and heart of gratitude to all of those who are concerned about you, and gradually come to wish for the happiness of all the people in the world.

This doesn't mean that by solving a single problem we will be happy forever. But let's begin to work together to develop a gracious mind and heart like that of our Buddha!



The Dharma Leaders Training was held!

Welcoming its second year, the Dharma Leaders Training for developing overseas leaders was held 13 to 25 July, mainly at the headquarters of Rissho Kosei-kai in Tokyo Japan. There were two graduating classes. The first class is made up of 11 people whose primary language is English, and the second class is made up of 10 people with various other primary languages. For this year, there were participants from a total of eight countries: the US, India, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, Bangladesh, Brazil, Mongolia and Japan (IBC.)

The program focused on classes to learn the Threefold Lotus Sutra and the ritual practices of Rissho Kosei-kai. The participants experienced practice of tedoru, michibiki*, the annual memorial service and so on during the missionary training at local Dharma Centers in Japan. The second graduating class visited the Founder's birthplace in Suganuma, and learned to more deeply grasp the Founder's experience and aspiration through walking in his footsteps.

We are certain we will be hearing much more of the achievements of their Dharma missions all over the world in the future. *Tedoru: guiding the members, Michibiki: introducing others to the Dharma



Living in the Present Moment

President of Risho Kosei-kai Nichiko Niwano

Tapping into Our Full Strength

It pains my heart to hear the news that, with no hint of an early economic recovery in sight, the already high suicide rate in Japan has been increasing this year. At the same time, almost everyone feels anxious about what the future holds. Some people may be ruefully recalling bygone days. Yet, I think it is precisely at such times as this that, rather than longing for the past or being anxious about the future, we should be valuing the present moment.

In discourses with his disciples, Shakyamuni spoke of the length of human life as the time in which one takes a breath. He even used the Sanskrit word *kshana*, meaning an inconceivably short mind-moment, to describe life. Since what occurs in the present is all that we ever have before our eyes and since it is only that with which we human beings can actively engage, we should be living in the present moment to the fullest. In other words, each and every moment is part of our actual lives.

Certainly, we can neither relive the past nor experience the future before it arrives. When we clearly recognize this, we are filled with the feeling of living life fully by exercising care for the people around us and devoting our hearts and minds to what is taking place in front of us.

The kanji character for “thought” or “mindfulness” is made up of the two characters for “now” and “heart,” with the one for “heart” beneath the one for “now.” As this combination of characters can suggest to us, through a way of living in which we put all of our mental and spiritual energy into the “now,” in other words, leading a life full of mindfulness, we can develop a future filled with hope, cheerfulness, and joy.

Cheerful and Warm

Let us look at the situation of newly hired office workers who often have to perform minor errands for their senior coworkers. Whether they complain about such demands being unfair and perform them halfheartedly or accept that such work is important for them right now, and undertake it with enthusiasm, can make a great difference in their development in their jobs. These new workers may later be given the opportunity to take on a major responsibility at work because they could be trusted to devote their best efforts to performing even minor tasks.

Some reemployed veteran workers who return after an absence for child-rearing or other family reasons may be given positions they feel are beneath them. If they change



their way of looking at what they consider a boring job and accept it with good grace, they will create a more pleasant atmosphere for others as well as themselves. The reason is that once they abandon their attachments and fixed ideas about their former careers and concentrate on doing their best at the job in front of them, what seems tedious and unfulfilling can become more meaningful and something to be performed with thankfulness. Freeing the mind from previous attachments is the best way to lead a happy life. It allows us to lead lives of gratitude freely and joyfully.

In leading such a life, what matters most is being self-reliant. For instance, the reason children can become so enthusiastic at play that they lose all sense of time is that they themselves are in change. No one is dictating to them.

Yet, it is important that we value the people around us. When our relations with them are as cheerful and warm as a sunshine-filled day we strive for the Buddha’s compassion and wisdom to interact with them. Our lives then will be enriched by as many such encounters as we experience. Whether it is consideration for the people around us at our workplace, or showing affection and respect for the members of our families, as long as we are fully mindful of everyone we deal with face to face we can build harmonious relationships between ourselves and others.

Scientists tell us that life on earth began some 3.8 billion years ago, so the present is but a brief instant in a period that seems almost like eternity. But the present actually is filled with precious moments that are the materials of our lives. Since that is the case, we should let go of past regrets, stop chasing after an illusory future, and keep in mind the need to live in the “now” of every moment so that we will lead our limited lives to the fullest.

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.

Opening the Heart:
The Four Steps toward Buddha-knowledge---Opening, Showing, Awakening, and Entering

“The buddhas appear in the world only for the one very great purpose of causing all living beings to attain the Buddha-knowledge; in other words, for the sake of causing living beings to obtain enlightenment, realizing that they can become buddhas.”

(Buddhism for Today, p. 49)

Founder Nikkyo Niwano said, “The buddhas appear in the world for a single great cause---open up the Buddha Way and lead all beings to it so they may become buddhas.” For this to happen, our hearts must first of all be open.

When we listen to other people describing their troubles, it is sometimes easier for us to recognize the cause of their problems before we actually hear what they are feeling in their hearts. When this happens, we want to immediately address the cause of their problems and give them useful advice based on our own experiences, asking them, “why don’t you try this?” or “why don’t you do?”

Our intention may be to help the other person, and our advice may be the right thing to do in terms of common sense. However, no matter how correct the advice, and however appropriate the suggested changes may be, bringing out such suggestions first and foremost will not open up hearts of other people. They are suffering because they cannot make those changes even though in fact they may be aware of them.

Their problems may be ones you have heard before, either something common to all periods or particular to modern society. For an afflicted person, however, no matter how common it may be, the problem is a serious matter.

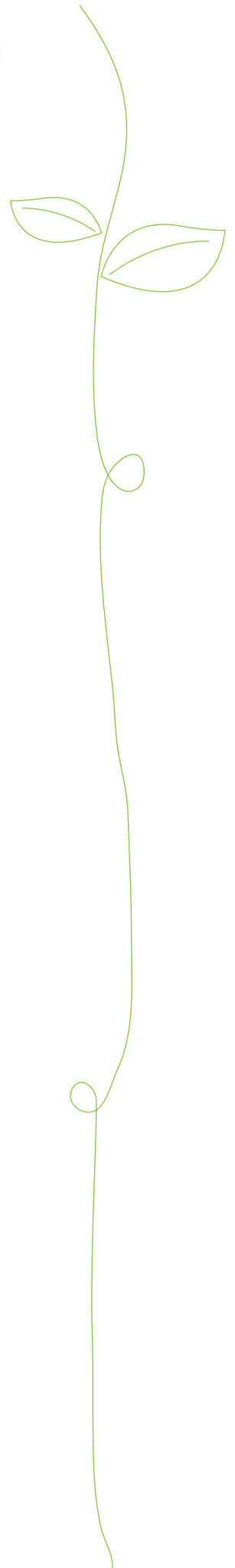
Even though the problem may seem familiar, its background and development will be different for every person. The question is whether you can feel truly sympathetic toward the individual afflicted with a particular problem. When you are able to sympathize, that is when you can interact with the person in the most appropriate way. Your sympathy is the point.

The way to get other people to open their hearts is to sympathize with whatever they are feeling. Just when they feel you have truly understood and accepted what they have been saying, that is when their hearts have been opened. In this state, they become willing to accept what you say to them.

“When we speak of revealing the buddha-nature, we are not talking about something unattainable. . . . When you see a sick child and move to help, when you see someone in trouble and feel as if their problems were your own... such things come quite naturally, but they are nothing but the buddha-nature revealing itself.”

(Kosei, Oct. 1976, p. 14-15)

The Buddha teaches us to reveal our buddha-nature and become buddhas, and to discover the buddha-nature in the people we meet, recognize it, and worship it. When we do



this, they also become able to recognize their buddha-nature, awaken to their own value, and move naturally onto the Buddha Way. When I was in middle school, probably as a result of accumulated fatigue my mother became unwell and was admitted to a hospital. Even after she came home, she continued to have to rest in bed. Many people were worried about her, and tried to help by giving her advice, telling her what she had done wrong, and offering encouraging words. My mother was impatient, thinking she had to hurry and get better, but her body did not respond and she failed to recover as quickly as she would have liked.

One evening during this time, the founder was especially concerned about how my mother, his daughter-in-law, was doing; he did not merely inquire but went upstairs to see her in her room. He simply sat down beside her bed and repeated, "You have done a good job, a very good job," all the while rubbing her back.

My mother told us later that at this moment she felt truly that she would like to be a gentle person who could comfort others with kind words when they were suffering, as the founder had done for her.

"Unless you can palpably feel and understand the suffering, worry, and joy of others, you will not be able to explain the Dharma in a way that will be best for them."

(Kosei, Sept. 1964, p. 11)

The most important thing is to have the ability to understand what other people are experiencing internally their joys and sorrows.

One time, at a training workshop for members of Rissho Kosei-kai men's groups, someone posed a question to the founder.

"It has been ten years since I was posted to my present location," the man said. "It is not that I feel I am in a rut there, but I do feel ready to test myself somewhere else. Every year during personnel transfer season, I keep thinking that this year I will finally be transferred, but my name never comes up. Please tell me how I should deal with this." The founder smiled and answered by saying, "Well, you're a lucky fellow! If you think of yourself as putting down roots in that one place and apply yourself thoroughly to your work, you can be blessed with the merit you have accumulated there. Perhaps you can make up your mind to this if you imagine that you are going to live the rest of your life and be buried there."

At this, another man raised his hand to ask a question.

"I am now starting my second year at my present job. Until now, for some reason I have been transferred here and there about every two or three years. As soon as I feel I am really getting settled and making a real start in my work, I receive another transfer notice. How am I to deal with this?"

The founder smiled and answered by saying, "Well, you're a lucky fellow, too. Precisely because you do not know when you may be transferred, you can try to do the work of the greatest substance every day so you can move on without regrets. I hope you will throw yourself into your work every day so that when transfer season comes around, you can feel ready to go at any time."

The content of these two pieces of advice when looked at out of context, seem to contradict each other. In reality, however, they are based on deep understanding and sympathy for what was troubling each individual's mind, and were spoken with wisdom rooted in the hope of leading each of them along the path to happiness and the world of the Buddha. Hearing this story, I could not help but sense the profoundly compassionate nature of the founder's spirit.

The first thing to remember is rid yourself of feelings of attachment and keep your heart open. People open their hearts to advice when it comes from someone who accepts them just as they are. When you are trying to get others to open their hearts to you, you must open your own heart to them.

"'Revealed' means that first a person's eyes are opened, for if his eyes are closed, he will be unable to see anything. His eyes are opened to the fact that all human beings possess the buddha-nature."

**(Shinshaku Hokke Sambu-kyo [New Commentary on the Threefold Lotus Sutra],
vol. 8, p. 109)**

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.



The founder's trademarks were his open heart and smiling countenance; he was of course known for these features all over Japan, and everyone he met outside Japan also recognized them.

Someone once described his smile by saying, "He was not exactly smiling because he was happy or enjoying himself--it was a smile that seemed to spring up from deep inside him. The founder's spirit was smiling." I feel that describes it exactly. Whenever memories of the founder well up in my mind, no matter what their context, I am always left with the impression that he was smiling.

"I am often asked why I am able to keep on smiling no matter what happens. There is no particular secret about why I am smiling. My smile is my true reality. The Buddha is a smile."

(Tada Hitasura Ni [Only Singlemindedly], p. 35)

The founder's smiling face was not a mere personal trademark. The founder's warm smile penetrated and opened all hearts. With our hearts thus opened, it is now our turn to open the hearts of those around us and communicate that warmth with our own smiles and words.

It is up to us to make a smiling face the trademark not just of the founder, but of all Rissho Kosei-kai members.

"What is it that the Buddha is teaching us through the Lotus Sutra? Its point is to "bring salvation to all"; its great declaration is that "all people who hear this sutra will surely be saved." The important thing is to firmly embrace the Buddha's desire for our salvation, which is his compassion."

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

The founder met everyone without timidity, yet without self-importance. He always opened his own heart, accepted other people and learned from them.

The true teaching quite naturally flows into any heart as open as the founder's. I hope we can follow in his footsteps and have hearts that are wide open.

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.

However, the occurrence of such mysterious phenomena had decreased gradually, and it was difficult for me to share my experiences with others. As more things began to go wrong, I began to realize how much I was able to learn through dealing with my own negative experiences. I began to reflect on my old thought patterns, and my former way of life. And I came to believe that all the things that had not gone as I had wished, and all the people who did not behave as I had wanted them to, were in reality chances to practice the Dharma. I saw that I could cultivate myself through them in order to earn the Buddha's wisdom and perseverance. When I learned the concept that "The nature of Dharma Causation is empty," I recognized that all phenomena that did not match up with my desires would one day change and disappear.

I had the opportunity to install the focus of ancestor appreciation at the end of 2007. I acquired the habit of Sutra recitation every morning as a result of this installation. Through Sutra recitation, passages from the Lotus Sutra gradually entered my mind, and I applied them in my daily life. I realized that the truths of the Lotus Sutra are firmly planted in daily life. And I accumulated a sense of the truthfulness of the Lotus Sutra through my daily life experiences.

When reciting the Sutra in front of the altar, I could not help but shed tears. Last year, at the end of the Ullambana Ceremony, Ms. Xie, a member of our church, said, "I feel my ancestors are pleased with my recitation, and I appreciate that you and I have had this opportunity to recite together." For some reason, I began to weep just as I heard her say "the ancestors." I was surprised at my own response. During the last Ullambana Ceremony, I went to the Dojo for seven days in a row for the first time, concentrating on reciting the Sutra like never before. Before I had started coming to the Dojo everyday, I had earnestly wished that I could recite together my ancestors; that's what probably led to such a reaction. Through such an experience, I realized that it is important to conduct the recitation for the ancestors, not only to offer the posthumous names, but also to personally participate in the Sutra recitation ceremony.

When I recited aloud with the members for the first time, there were passages of the Threefold Lotus Sutra that were too long to follow, and sometimes this made me doze during recitation. However, for the last one or two years, I have made it a point to read until, little by little, I could make sense of the Sutra's contents; this made me feel that the more I read the

Threefold Lotus Sutra, the more I liked it. And also I experienced a deep feeling of joy.

The one line of the Lotus Sutra which I like the best is the Buddha's phrase: "I always abide here teaching the Dharma." I feel the Buddha leads us through various phenomena with his vast and boundless compassion and strength. Or, in the Sutra, the Buddha says he will patiently teach us over and over to follow the right path. I am deeply grateful to the Buddha for the way he always watches us like our merciful father. Now, I have begun to talk to the Buddha in my mind. And I would like to express my gratitude to the Sangha members around me who have always supported me. After I started to have faith in Buddhism, I came to feel that my life has a goal, and I feel much more encouraged.

Because I became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai, I made many friends. My daily life became sweeter sweet. And I learned a lot from Sangha members. I learned that this life is impermanent. I think this is why that we should value our time more and earnestly practice. The Dharma is a precious treasure. The Dharma is the teaching that carefully expounds how we can liberate ourselves from suffering and problems that arise in our lives. We might not be able to change our circumstances, but this is why we should make an effort to change our mind. I think if we don't have an opportunity to encounter the Dharma, our lives will be wasted. So, I would like to devote myself to practicing the teaching, spreading the Dharma, and making a life with the Buddha's light which universally illuminates all of us.

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

President Niwano, thank you very much.

Thank you very much everyone.

(The End)



The Eyes of an Ant and Eyes of a Bird

In the name of “Development,” trees are cut down and nature is destroyed. Liquid waste runs into the sea, polluting it, and the amount of the plankton in the sea decreases.

Humans need oxygen to live, but the functions of trees and phytoplankton are necessary for making oxygen. 30 % of the total amount of oxygen on this planet is made by trees, and 70 % is made by the phytoplankton in the sea water. Specialists in environmental affairs warn that if the destruction of nature continues, humans will soon face a crisis more critical than that of war.

In other countries, the law requires that the people plant as

The Teaching of Founder Nikkyo Niwano

many trees as they cut down. Mr. Kenichi Takemura, the critic, says that we need to have two kinds of eyes; one is the “eyes of ant,” which signifies the viewpoint focused on the reality seen as ants bore through the ground. The other is the “eyes of bird,” which signifies the wide viewpoint seen from birds in flight. He also says that if we have those eyes, we won’t act in a wrong manner. If we don’t live together in harmony with nature by understanding such viewpoints, we will ultimately tie ourselves down.

From “Kaisozuikan 3”(Kosei Publishing Co.) P50-51
Translated by Rissho Kosei-kai International

*** Column ***

This summer, from July 13th to 25th, the first Dharma Training for Leaders was held once again at the Headquarters in Tokyo. It is the second and graduating year for the First Group (11 participants), and the first year for the Second Group (10 participants). The training is being attended by 23 participants, including two interpreters, from eight countries. The atmosphere was very vibrant. The day’s schedule was rather full, starting with the 6 o’clock Sutra Recitation in the morning till the last lecture at 8:30 in the evening. It was during this period, on July 14th, that I witnessed something that touched me deeply. On this day,

the Second Group headed for Suganuma, Founder Niwano’s birthplace, and the First Group went back to the local churches where each of them did his or her training last year. Dr. Jane Perri, who is with the First Group, however, stayed behind, as she needed to conduct an on-line Dharma class sponsored by RKINA Center. Jane had developed this Dharma study program together with Rev. Kris Ladusau, and on this day, the last class was held. After finishing the class on line, Jane and Kris, hand in hand, joyfully celebrated its success. A study class in America was conducted from Japan: How small the world has become!

(Kotaro Suzuki)

The Rissho Kosei-kai English Website renewed!

From 1st of August, the Rissho Kosei-kai English Website has been renewed. Restarted with a new design and offers more thorough contents. Please visit the site at <http://www.rk-world.org/index.html>

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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