

The Six Perfections: Meditation The Secret of a Peaceful Mind



This month, I would like to talk about “meditation,” one of the Six Perfections (Six Paramitas). The Japanese word *zenjo* (meaning “meditation”) is divided into two characters; *zen* and *jo*. *Zen* means “tranquil mind” or “steadfast mind.” *Jo* means a state of mind which is calm and not disturbed by anything. To attain this state of mind, it is important to not only make single-minded efforts, but also to see things properly and consider conditions with a calm mind.

In my case, once I choose to do something, I can concentrate deeply on it. Even though I am busy, my mind remains calm because there is no time to think

about other things. But if my mind is not calmly focused on a single thing, it never settles down enough to silence extraneous thoughts. Without this single-pointed focus, I could never effectively work on what truly needs to be done. Then, I may find that my aspiration to study the Dharma is fading and I may well just waste my days being lazy. But if I can deeply commit to accomplishing something, not just for myself, but for others as well, I can increase my awareness and deepen my understanding of the Buddha’s teaching.

We are given the guidance that the Buddha arranges everything that takes place around us for our spiritual growth and development. If we are determined about what we do, we will not be able to blame others or complain, or grumble but we will be capable of maintaining a peaceful state of mind instead. I really wish to acquire such an attitude.

12 Essentials for Good Living

Dharma Training for Leaders Carried Out at Headquarters in Tokyo

Rissho Kosei-kai International held the long-awaited Dharma training seminar for overseas leaders from July 12th through the 24th. The second graduating class consisted of 10 leaders, and the third graduating class 12. In addition, 12 leaders from the Korean Dharma Center, 4 from the Taipei Dharma Center and 5 from the Tainan Dharma Center (who had all completed the programs separately held by Rissho Kosei-kai International at their respective Dharma Centers) gathered together for the seminar on July 20th. A total of 52 participants from 10 countries were in attendance.

Through this educational program, many students renewed their determination to practice the teachings in their daily lives from now on. Rissho Kosei-kai International hopes that they will strive to spread the Dharma in their own countries, making it their motto to be cheerful, warm, and gentle, that is, to keep a spirit exemplified by the bodhisattva Never Despise in the Lotus Sutra.

Special Topics



Giving Leads to Wisdom

President of Rissho Kosei-kai Nichiko Niwano

Through Generous Giving, We Learn Happiness

Giving is one of the virtuous deeds categorized in the Six Perfections as the first practice that a bodhisattva undertakes. A Buddhist scripture says, “Donation is the Pure Land of bodhisattvas,” which means that giving is important to those learning the Buddha’s teaching, and can be called the bodhisattva practice closest at hand.

What, then, is the spirit of giving that supports this practice?

It is compassion, consideration, and empathy.

Giving is mainly of three kinds: material donations, such as offering food and clothing to the needy and financial support to Buddhist organizations; donations of the Dharma, sharing the Buddha’s teachings with others; and donations of the body, or relieving the anxieties or suffering of others. All of them are demonstrated in concrete actions and expressions of thoughtfulness and empathy, so giving, in other words, equals compassion.

It follows, then, that donation is not some rigid requirement that we have to follow.

The spirit of giving arises from compassion and consideration for others so that we do not just stand by, but cannot help doing something for others. It may not be wrong to say that giving will give equal joy to the donor, and that moreover the donor and the recipient experience happiness together.



Becoming Profoundly Compassionate

A friendly look, a cheerful face, kind words, volunteer service, being considerate, giving someone a seat, offering a place to rest—these are the seven types of nonmaterial donation, the practice



of compassion that we are taught anyone can put into practice. The point of this teaching is to know joy of giving as a manifestation of the compassionate mind, even without financial means.

Shakyamuni preaches the meaning of giving this way: “Those who share what little they have with others are practicing the Dharma. Even though people who are capable of making thousands of sacrifices have made hundreds of thousands of sacrifices, they do not receive even one hundredth of the merits received for such deeds from those with little.”

What he means is not that we should give because we have much, but that giving even when we have little brings us greater merits.

In Rissho Kosei-kai at an earlier time there were occasions when people who were in difficult economic circumstances or who suffered due to their self-interest were advised to make material donations. When I was a young man, this struck me as a little harsh, but eventually I realized that in doing so one is complying with the profound wish of the Buddha.

The Buddha’s wish is that by giving up our attachment to money we realize that happiness develops from being grateful, and also that by using our money to make others happy we experience a joy that cannot be obtained by measuring our own gains and losses.

When we free ourselves from attachments by giving, we are able to see things the way they really are. Through this, our fixed ideas are removed, the wisdom-eyes that are inherent to human nature are opened, and then we begin to see the ultimate real-

ity of all things. Indeed, we can say that giving leads to wisdom.

It takes time, however, for new members who are too concerned with their own interests to appreciate this. In such cases, it is important that older members in the Sangha describe their own experiences and tell of the joy they realized when they let go of even a little of what they possess, and share the happiness of serving others with a compassionate heart.

That giving is extremely meaningful is demonstrated by the fact that the practice of giving makes every person a profoundly compassionate human being.

What is most important for Rissho Kosei-kai and the Sangha is how best to use the money that members gladly donated, to lead to the happiness of many others. In this sense, the development of our Sangha of good friends and acquaintances, through the cooperation of all members, has become an issue of great importance.

This is because when the Sangha is functioning in a lively spirit, it demonstrates that it contains many members whose hearts are overflowing with compassion and their number is increasing. When this happens, we will be closer to our goal of a peaceful world, and many more people will have achieved happiness. Thereby, the practice of each and every one of us will be meeting the wish of the Buddha.

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.

Dissemination Work: Demonstrating a Buddha-heart

“We often talk about one of our activities—the ‘general guidance campaign’ in which members visit other members’ homes in a specific area to invite them to attend faith activities at a Dharma Center. This activity is a call to everyone to reveal their buddha-nature together.”

(Niwano Nikkyo Howa Senshu [Selected Sermons of Nikkyo Niwano], vol. 3, p. 272)

Founder Nikkyo Niwano often said, “Rissho Kosei-kai is an organization dedicated to propagating the substance of the Lotus Sutra.”

The Lotus Sutra contains a variety of parables, but nowhere among them are stories in which the Buddha forces the teaching like good medicine down his followers’ throats, or scolds them for not taking it. The Buddha always trusts us, waits for us with infinite patience, gives us what we wish for, pleases us, and calms our fears as he leads us along the path.

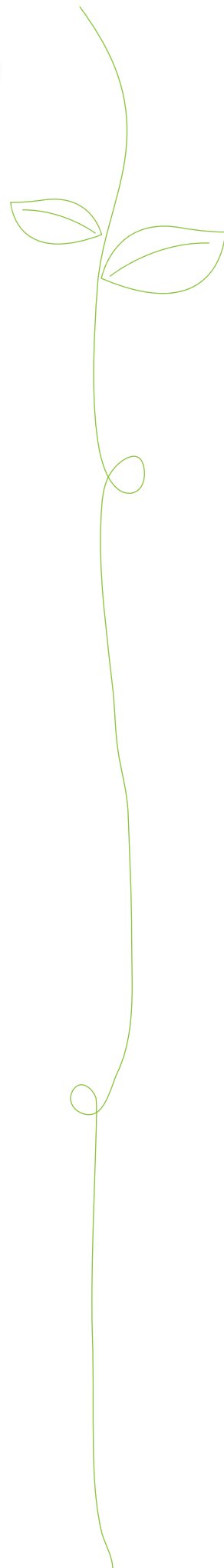
Carrying out exactly what the Lotus Sutra teaches—that is what it means to propagate the substance of the Lotus Sutra.

“Rather than think of ourselves as representatives of the Buddha teaching others, we should think of ourselves as helping the Buddha to teach others. Like Punna-Mantaniputta, known for his skill in communicating the Dharma to other people, the praiseworthy among us are those who can spread the Dharma and put it into practice.”

(Niwano Nikkyo Howa Senshu [Selected Sermons of Nikkyo Niwano], vol. 4, p. 275)

Leading others to the faith is a way of establishing warm, friendly relations with other people. These activities also serve to create “seeds for growth” by helping us reconfirm our own feelings of gratitude and liberation.

The important points in this regard are to feel empathy for the anxiety, suffering, and joy of other people, and discover the virtue and effort in their situation, and then place your hands together in reverence and learn what you can from that situation. An indispensable part of this process is to express in words your wishes for other people’s happiness and your perception of their buddha-nature.



“The only art to guiding others lies in the heartfelt wish for the other person’s happiness. Everything else proceeds from this.”

(Niwano Nikkyo Howa Senshu [Selected Sermons of Nikkyo Niwano], Special Volume, p. 177)

I once had an opportunity to talk with the head of the young housewives group at a certain Dharma Center who told me about her situation. A local woman she had persuaded to join the group often contacted her just before events to which she had been invited to say, “My son has suddenly developed a fever—I won’t be able to come in today.” The head of the group always felt extremely disappointed by this, and thought to herself, “I wish she had come in and performed her duties; in doing that the fact of her son’s illness would have helped open up the world of divine protection to her.” At the same time, however, she was unsure whether this was the right way to pursue the relationship.

I told her, “Why don’t you try to put the woman at ease and treat her with respect, saying, ‘You seem to be very kind—your son is lucky to have such a good mother. I am sure it isn’t easy for you, but go ahead and take good care of your son. Just let me know if there is anything I can do to help.’ If it were me, I would much rather hear something like that than ‘Why aren’t you coming?’ If you speak to her kindly and she gets the idea that you sincerely would like to see her at events, I’m sure she will show up one day soon.”

“For people leading ordinary lives like us, it is impossible to completely eradicate all worldly desires. We have to find peace of mind ‘without cutting off [our] earthly cares and renouncing [our] five desires,’ as the Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue says.”

(Yakushin, monthly magazine, February 1974)

If you try to force the Dharma onto someone, saying, “This is how it ought to be,” or “This is a good thing,” somewhere along the line you will reach an impasse and start to feel regretful. The Dharma does not exist to be applied to people; it exists to help them achieve happiness.

The true “world of divine protection” consists in the discovery of both liberation and joy within the events and encounters we are experiencing here and now. We need to feel this and catch hold of it.

Without getting too concerned about the reality that things do not always work out as you would like, look to discover and draw out the buddha-nature in others by developing a warm, caring spirit. It is not your words that communicate with others. It is your spirit that, with the warmth that develops and grows, reaches out to them.

“If one has the opportunity to come into contact with a teaching that provides real peace of mind and deep satisfaction, one will gladly accept it.”

(Shinshaku Hokke Sambu-kyo [New Commentary of the Threefold Lotus Sutra], vol. 7, p. 141)

However, worries such as those of the head of the young housewives’ group occurred precisely because she came into contact with many people, and felt warm and sympathetic toward them. Feeling great appreciation for such a sincere young woman, I told her, “You are really exercising your spirit on behalf of others and that is a wonderful thing. I hope you will

accept with joy the fact that you are able to demonstrate your kindness through your relations with others in this way.”

Hearing this, her face brightened and she replied, “When I accept that I am able to be demonstrating warmth, I can also be more accepting of others. When I am able to do this I will be able to embrace others with warmth regularly.”

“A conversation with someone or hearing someone talking about his or her problem can serve as an opportunity to plant a seed that will spring into life and grow into enlightenment. It is said that ‘buddha-seeds spring from causation.’ I believe that the seeds of buddhahood are indeed awakened through causation.”

(Hosshin [Raising Aspirations], monthly magazine, January 1992)

The existence of others gives us the opportunity to share the teachings and demonstrate our own warmth while making contact with them. People do not exist for the sake of the teachings; the teachings exist for people, in order to bring them joy.

Thus, rather than immediately trying to teach others, first show how happy you are for being able to perform guidance work. Just try to communicate your own joyful feelings and warm spirit. You do not have to push yourself hard. You will discover your own buddha-nature as well as that of others and feel spiritual warmth during the natural course of your relationship. When you feel your own spirit warming, you will start to look forward to your next meeting.

As you continue to wish for the happiness of others and work to lead them to the faith, in time you will find that you have also developed and grown closer to the Buddha. As is written in chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra, “Bodhisattva Never Despise,” “Because under former buddhas . . . I preached it [this sutra] to others, I soon attained Perfect Enlightenment.” That is, by teaching others we ourselves become buddhas.

“We must make ourselves a ‘good condition’ for every person and nurture faith in them. This is the shortest way, and also the true way, to guide other people.”

(Shinshaku Hokke Sambu-kyo [New Commentary of the Threefold Lotus Sutra], vol. 4, p. 65)

Founder Niwano once said to members, “We ask every one of you to give guidance to at least one other person because the process of relating to that other person while sincerely hoping for his or her happiness functions as a devotional exercise for your own benefit.”

In pursuing dissemination work, the problems being borne by others serve as lessons to us, and help us to grow and embark on our true path in life. Rather than simply seek to reform the other person, when you focus your mind on how the Buddha cares about others, your own spirit gradually comes closer to this ideal. The Buddha will reward you with an outcome that corresponds to the progress of your spirit. Our dissemination work is all about savoring this process.

“We must never lose sight of the ultimate purpose, which is to lead others eventually to the truth about the world and human beings that the Buddha has taught us.”

(Shinshaku Hokke Sambu-kyo [New Commentary of the Threefold Lotus Sutra], vol. 4, p. 66)

We are “the Buddha’s messengers.” The role of the Buddha’s messengers is to revere the

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.



buddha-nature of all people. To create an atmosphere in which anyone can speak confidently, first of all we need to rid ourselves of our preconceptions and listen carefully to what others have to say, without preparing our reply in advance.

Doing this helps us to adopt a warm-hearted attitude and think of those who are experiencing hardships as “people making strenuous efforts” and people who are shouldering irksome responsibilities as “bodhisattvas giving their all to others.” Such an attitude also transforms people who seem selfish and self-centered into “people who can express themselves just as they are.”

“All people possess the buddha-nature, or more precisely, all people originally are the buddha-nature itself. No matter how you consider this, it is an incontrovertible truth.”

(Niwano Nikkyo Howa Senshu [Selected Sermons of Nikkyo Niwano], Special Volume, p. 56)

Even though you believe you are doing it for other people's own good, when your approach is one of attempting to reform their faults, they will never open their hearts to you. It is best initially to praise their virtues.

The human heart is honest. When treated warmly people will respond with warmth, and when they feel accepted they will feel secure and forget their suffering. Then the strength to make a new start and move ahead will come into play.

“There is no more virtuous deed than guiding others. Guiding others creates more buddhas in this world.”

(Niwano Nikkyo Howa Senshu [Selected Sermons of Nikkyo Niwano], Special Volume, p. 270)

The founder taught us, “There is no greater virtue than to sow seeds of the encounter with the Buddha.”

As a result of our dissemination work, it is a fact that people have come into contact with the Dharma and found happiness. I hope we can continue to do that with pride.

From *Kaiso-sama ni Naraite* (Kosei Publishing Co.) p.181-191



Protected by the Buddha Part 1

Tomoaki Kinoshita
Chapter Leader of the Men's Group, Kobe Dharma Center

* This testimony was delivered at the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the Kobe Dharma Center on April 11, 2010. This is the first of three installments.



I would like to express my gratitude for this opportunity to share my religious experience on the 60th anniversary of the inauguration of the Kobe Dharma Center. According to the Oriental zodiac, the sixtieth year has the significance of “returning to the starting point.” On this occasion, I decided to take a fresh look at the starting point of my life by re-reading the diary entries that I wrote in the past. My personal starting point was coming to the awareness that my life is being sustained; I came to this awareness through suffering brought on by illness.

In January of last year, I went to a hospital affiliated with our company because I had been in poor physical condition. My condition

was bad enough that I had to enter the hospital to be tested. I was told that I must cancel all work-related activity after the month of February. I hadn't expected such a situation. I entered the hospital on January 23rd and underwent tests day after day. On the 26th, my doctor told my family and me, “The name of your disease is pancreatic cancer and we found that the cancer has spread to the liver. It's impossible to have an operation to remove the cancer. Therefore, we recommend an anticancer drug treatment, but if this isn't effective, you won't have more than a year to live. Moreover, considering the metastasis, you probably won't survive five to seven months.” The next day, on the 27th, I visited a professor of the surgery department at Kobe University Hospital to ask for a second opinion.

Early that day, we had a midwinter sutra recitation led by the members of the youth group. After the recitation, my wife and our two sons sought guidance from our minister. He said to them, “I think your father isn't anxious about his own condition, but he is worried about you, the members of the men's group in his chap-

ter, and his job. Please be the kind of family that can relieve his anxieties. It's also important for you to see the way he lives his life.” After they received this guidance, the doctor examined me again. Although I had a glimmer of hope, the diagnosis was the same as the first one. The professor spoke to us quietly and slowly, “I'm sorry to say that you should put your affairs in order. You have half a year or a year left to live. There are many people who are in a more serious condition than you. Please treasure the time you have left.” Instantly I thought to myself, “It's all over for me. I'm going to die.” When I knew my time was drawing near, I felt like running away, and crying out in regret and fear. But, as I heard the professor's words, I also had the feeling that I should pull myself together so my family could maintain their composure.

We left the hospital for the Dharma center. I unexpectedly received guidance from the minister. He told me, “Please live each and every day with care, and show your family that you live your life in such a way. Further, please do for others whatever kind deeds you can.” I returned to my

hospital room thinking deeply about the minister's guidance, and my family and I tried to figure out how to create a home where we could be free from anxiety, and how we should show kindness to others. I thought that I should simply accept the facts of the situation, but still, I couldn't help asking myself, “What have I done to deserve this? My children have just gone out into the world, but I won't be able to help them with their worries about their jobs. And my wife will only face more burdens, like economic stresses, handling my nursing care, and so on. I can't apologize to her enough for this.” I was incapable of getting my thoughts in order.

But, my wife said to me, “Let's stop saying ‘I'm sorry.’ From now on, let's maintain a sense of gratitude. On that day, she also wrote the following words in our diary, “My dear husband, let's live each and every day with care. I was happy that we could go to the Dharma center. The Buddha always smiles, doesn't he?”

(To be continued)

Humility Before Nature

The idea that we human beings never live our lives solely for ourselves but that our lives are supported by everything around us, is a key Buddhist concept. We are allowed to take advantage of all the resources of Mother Nature so that we can maintain our own lives. But human beings have become so arrogant as to take nature for granted, because they believe it exists just for their benefit.

Some people say without hesitation that we human beings control nature. This kind of thinking has led to the destruction of nature and brought about the progressive worsening of our living conditions. Ultimately, we are digging our own graves.

The Teaching of Founder Nikkyo Niwano

A famous French alpinist says, "Human beings look puny compared to the size of mountains. It is hubris of human beings to conquer them. As a matter of fact, we are permitted to spend just a short time at the top of a mountain."

That is exactly what I believe. If we forget how great the power of nature is, and how many blessings of nature we enjoy, we will someday have to pay a heavy price for our arrogance. I was greatly impressed at the mountain climber's wonderful words only because he directly struggled with nature and truly understood its might.

From *Kaisozuikan 4* (Kosei Publishing Co.) p.172-173
Translated by Rissho Kosei-kai International

*** Column ***

On July 10th, a lotus viewing event was held at the garden in front of the Great Sacred Hall. Once again this year President Niwano was in attendance, and enjoyed the lotus flowers that bloom gloriously in the garden at this time of year. The lotus bulbs that were planted last year took root firmly and bloomed with beautiful large flowers this year.

Among all the flowers, the flowers of the Oga Lotus, which have survived more than 2000 years in seed form and woken from a long sleep in the 20th century, really make us realize the wonder of life. When I put my hand over one of them, I felt warmth, and a kind of wave of activity, which went through my

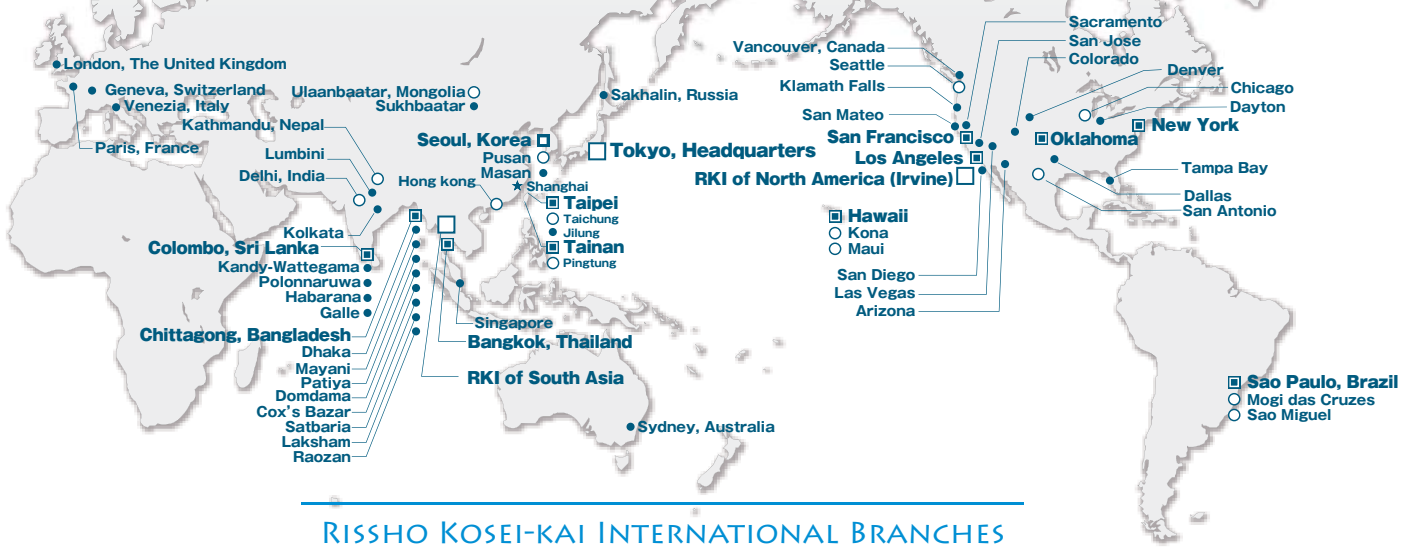
whole body like a thunderclap. Standing in front of the lotus pond, I found myself murmuring "Thank you" to the flowers. A Japanese poet and Buddhist priest, Saigyō, wrote a poem: "Though I do not know what it is that dwells here, I shed grateful tears at its presence in spite of myself." The lotus flowers at the Great Sacred Hall's garden have a noble quality that purifies people's hearts.

Coincidentally, 54 leaders gathered in one place at the headquarters of Rissho Kosei-kai from all over the world to participate in the Dharma Training Seminar held there. I believe that when they saw the lotus flowers bloom, they each pledged to make their Dharma flowers bloom 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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