

Living the LOTUS

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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 Founder's Essay  

A Broad-minded Perspective

THE best opportunity you have to cultivate yourself is when you clash with someone who is hostile toward you, or refuses to go along with what you say. When we run into such situations, we can't help but learn the lesson that people can be really difficult to deal with.

In contrast to those who casually respond "yeah, sure," accepting whatever you say, when you butt heads with the type of people who argue every point and look for nothing but your faults, and earnestly work to reach an understanding with them, a loneliness and frailty, hidden behind their obstinate attitude, will slowly become visible. And once you know those people's

hearts, you will no longer be indifferent to them.

As a matter of fact, when you bump up against all kinds of people, attempt to engage them, and come to grasp the real nature of the human heart, you will develop a stronger nerve. You will no longer shrink back in fear from anyone. This is what it means to gain the understanding that comes from broadmindedness.

Without understanding the depths of the human heart, you won't experience genuine concern for others, and because of that, people won't follow your lead.

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Rissho Kosei-kai is a global Buddhist movement of people who strive to apply the teachings of the Threefold Lotus Sutra, one of the foremost Buddhist scriptures, in their daily lives and contribute to world peace. It was founded in 1938 by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano (1906–1999) and Rev. Myoko Naganuma (1889–1957). With the guidance of President Nichiko Niwano, Rissho Kosei-kai members actively share the Dharma widely and engage in peace activities both locally and internationally in cooperation with people from many walks of life.

The title of this newsletter, *Living the Lotus—Buddhism in Everyday Life*, conveys our hope of striving to practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in daily life in an imperfect world to enrich and make our lives more worthwhile, like beautiful lotus flowers blooming in a muddy pond. This newsletter aims to help people around the world apply Buddhism more easily in their daily lives.

President's Message

Standing Firm

by Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



First, Take a Deep Breath

The Dhammapada, one of the oldest extant sutras in the Buddhist canon, includes this verse: “He who can control the rumbling of his rising anger, just as if he were controlling a quickly running carriage, I call a good driver.”

Here, Shakyamuni is explaining the importance of controlling your anger. However, even though we are taught to do so, it is difficult to put the brakes on feelings or emotions, which are hardly limited to outbursts of anger. We humans are apt to say things we shouldn't say, give in to the temptation to buy things we shouldn't buy, and stray from the right path—and as a consequence, we may end up in conflict with others.

Well, then, when you feel that you are about to get carried away by anger, desire, or self-centered thinking, how can you stand firm against them?

I recommend that before you do anything, just take a breath. By simply taking one deep breath, you calm your heart down a little. It is also important that, if possible, you let matters rest overnight, and then think about them coolly.

Also, if you are someone who has religious faith, when the dark clouds of greed, anger, and ignorance begin to cover your mind, by turning your thoughts to “what would the Buddha think about this?” or “what would the Buddha do?” you can regain your cool composure. Instead of some form of existence such as the gods and the buddhas that are not visible, some people may turn to a role model close at hand with whom they have a direct connection and think “what would my father do?” or “what would my mother say?” and thereby quell their feelings of anger, desire, or selfishness.

The second practice of the Eightfold Path, “right thinking,” means “staying away from greed, anger, and ignorance, and thinking about things with a magnanimous mind like the Buddha.” When we apply this to our daily lives, it means that when we feel as if our emotions and impulses are about to run wild, we first take a deep breath and then stand firm, which is the gateway to practicing right thinking, isn't it?

The Mind of Consideration

Getting rid of the three evils of the mind, namely, greed, anger, and ignorance (that is, self-centered foolishness), and thinking about things with a magnanimous mind—I think all of you know how important this is. However, I have heard some people say in despair, sounding as if they had given up even trying, that because they knew this, the more they were told that they should become such people or that they should stay away from desires and attachments, the more they could only think of themselves as “useless” human beings whose minds will never be free from desire, anger, and selfishness. In that case, why don't we change our perspective slightly, examine what right thinking truly means, and deepen our understanding of it?

“Right thinking” means thinking about things correctly and without the greedy mind, the angry mind, and the mind that belittles other people. Put in different words, it means the mind that shares, the mind that warmly interacts with others, and the mind that is caring. And then, when we sum this up in a single word, it is none other than consideration. In other words, here, when we say “right,” we really mean “with the mind of consideration.”

No human being is perfect. Therefore, it is important that we cultivate the personal habit of thinking about things with the mind of consideration, even though we cannot get rid of greed or anger, which may sometimes take hold of our mind.

By doing so, anyone can think and act with a magnanimous mind like the Buddha's. However, whether “standing firm” or “thinking with the mind of consideration,” situations in which you find it truly difficult to do so will come around more than once in your lifetime.

I once talked about the phrase, “Be silent—like the sun, like a cool breeze, like a pillar, like a rock.” When you have trouble with someone, and especially if you feel that you are about to be swayed by intense emotions, think about the quietude of nature as described in this phrase and try to broaden your frame of mind. Just as we human beings and the natural world are one, you and the person before your eyes are also one—and by realizing this, we become the “good drivers” of our own minds. With a magnanimous mind like the Buddha's, we can lead lives of gratitude.

From *Kosei*, June 2018





Treasure the Present Moment



by Mr. Bimal Kanti Barua
Bangladesh Dharma Center

This Dharma Sharing (Spiritual Journey) speech was presented at a Members' Gathering at the Bangladesh Dharma Center on April 20, 2018.

EVERYONE, please guide me. My name is Bimal Kanti Barua. I happily live with my wife, and a daughter and a son. Currently, I am serving as chapter leader of the Chittagong South Chapter.

First, I would like to express my appreciation toward Rev. Mitsuyuki Arimoto and other leaders of the Bangladesh Dharma Center for giving me this opportunity to share my Dharma experience, which has allowed me to reflect anew upon myself.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Biplob Barua to start off this Dharma experience. In 2000, he mentored me and taught me about the wonderful Rissho Kosei-kai. He took me to Mr. Biman Kumar Barua's house in Patharghata, Chittagong. I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to Mr. Biman Kumar Barua for his initiative in spreading Rissho Kosei-kai's teachings in Bangladesh.

Many members who participated in activities



Mr. Bimal Kanti Barua delivers his Dharma Sharing speech at the Bangladesh Dharma Center.

together in the early days of the Bangladesh Dharma Center have since passed away. I am truly grateful that I have been able to stay healthy and continue my duty today.

I have lived in Japan for a long time because of my work and my interest in Japan continued even after I returned to Bangladesh. I could not understand Rissho Kosei-kai at the beginning. However, by looking at members' activities, I began to understand that even if you are unexperienced, or you are not a cleric, you are still able to convey the teachings to others; and I came to understand that Rissho Kosei-kai is a wonderful organization.

I was a newlywed when I joined Rissho Kosei-kai. My wife and I went to Singapore, Thailand, Nepal, and India on our honeymoon. While we were in Nepal, I met with Mr. Sailendra Bajracharya, chapter leader of Rissho Kosei-kai of Kathmandu. He taught me many things about Rissho Kosei-kai. On our way back to Bangladesh, we stopped by my relative's house in Kolkata. While we were there, I shared with my relative the teachings I had learned. Thereafter, that relative also became a member.

I came back from our honeymoon to find a guest from Japan, Mr. Kazumasa Iizawa, who had served as a minister at Dharma centers in Japan, visiting Bangladesh at that time. That was my first encounter with Mr. Iizawa. Since I could speak a little Japanese, I began to accompany Mr. Iizawa on Dharma dissemination as his interpreter. When the members of Bangladesh exceeded three hundred, Mr. Iizawa asked the Headquarters in Tokyo to purchase a land for a *hoza* center for local members. When we were

searching for the land, I met Mr. Sanjit Barua Bulu, who introduced the land to us. He is now deceased, but he always helped me a lot while he was alive.

Before I joined Rissho Kosei-kai, I was a type of person who thought I was always right and my understanding was always correct, which led me to argue with people on many occasions. I also had opinions about disagreements among the tenets of different Buddhist sects. After I joined Rissho Kosei-kai, however, I came to realize that there was no need to discuss which teaching is more correct. While every sect has its own teachings, I learned that in Rissho Kosei-kai you can start with whatever things you find you are able to practice. As I gradually came to understand it, I became willing to learn the teachings more deeply.

Just around that time, Mr. Kanchan Barua, who had studied the teachings and Dharma dissemination in the Gakurin Seminary's International Course at Rissho Kosei-kai's Headquarters in Tokyo, finished his study and returned to Bangladesh. I learned from him many things about the teachings and ritual etiquette of Rissho Kosei-kai. I was truly impressed by what I learned then, and the desire to share the teachings to as many people as possible grew inside me. Later, I received the Gohonzon, and the certification of the Dharma teacher. I started as an area leader and I am now serving as a chapter leader.

Through my roles at the Dharma center, I realized how difficult it was to share the teachings with other people. It also made me realize that life is not filled with only good things, and it's not always glamorous. I finally understood that as human beings, we are bound to face all kinds of difficulties as long as we live. From what I have experienced in my own life in this regard, I would like to share one with you.

This was my experience when I was running a factory that manufactured clothing. Our business

was not doing well due to many factors, and I was in heavy debt. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't find a solution to solve the problem. I felt like everything went pitch dark in front of me. As our income was extremely small, I even found it hard to keep my family together. On top of all this, another even more serious problem suddenly arose. Some time before, my brother and I had a house built for us to live in. Suddenly, my brother told me if I wouldn't pay half of the construction fee of the house soon, he would sell off the house. I was out of my mind, trying to figure out how to keep our house, and I was in despair. At such times the sangha members of Bangladesh were always by my side and supported me.

Thanks to their warm encouragement and support, I began to feel a little relieved. I participated in a lecture of Rev. Aritomi, which was held at the time. During the lecture, he spoke about his own experience of being in debt.

Rev. Aritomi said, "It is natural that things do not go as we wish. That is why instead of spending time on thinking about what you should have done in the past, valuing what is in front of you is more important for your future."

Referring to river streams, he said that when dirty water comes from upper stream, if the water becomes clean midstream, the dirty water will not go downstream. The same goes for our past experiences. If we make the most of the present moment, there will be a wonderful future waiting for us.

Listening to what Rev. Aritomi had to say, I felt I saw a light of hope in the dark. I began capable of thinking that I would treasure the present moment and tackle the problems before my eyes. I was also blessed with wonderful sangha members. Thanks to their kindness toward me, I was able to get back on my feet again.

Although I still have a lot of debt, I don't get

irritated anymore. Thanks to the teachings, I learned that all things happen to help us grow. I am thankful from the bottom of my heart for the sangha members who supported me when I was in trouble.

Please let me express my gratitude for Founder Niwano, who has established this wonderful Rissho Kosei-kai. Thanks to the organization, I was able to encounter these truly wonderful teachings. I began a further effort to disseminate the Dharma to share the teachings with as many people as possible. I was able to guide to Rissho Kosei-kai's teachings many people in my home town of Chendirpuni, in Chittagong, and in Dhaka. I have guided more than a hundred people to the faith until now, and I hope to continue guiding many more.

It was a great delight for me that a *hoza* center was built at Chendirpuni where I was born and raised. I am also really happy to hear that the Dharma dissemination has been growing in Kolkata and Bodhgaya in India and in many other places. These wonderful news about dissemination remind me of the times when Rev. Teruo Saito, then the minister of South Asia Division, sent me to do Dharma dissemination in Kolkata, for which I was collabo-

rating with Mr. Suman Barua of the Kolkata branch. Later, Mr. Suman Barua came to Bangladesh to receive the locally-bestowed Gohonzon, which was enshrined in his home in Kolkata. I have visited Kolkata three times, where I have guided thirty-six people. I think it is really wonderful that Kolkata branch has become a chapter and Mr. Suman Barua became the chapter leader. I would also like to thank Mr. Suman Barua's father and his sister Ms. Susmita Barua for their kindness, from the bottom of my heart.

It is not enough if we are the only ones who are happy; we have to think about others' happiness too. So that everyone can achieve true happiness, I will keep the Founder's spirit in my mind and share the teachings with more and more people. Recently, Rev. Aritomi gave us the guidance to show appreciation for our senior leaders and members preceding us, and help connect more people with the Buddha toward the twentieth anniversary of the Bangladesh Dharma Center. I would like to take a vow to devote myself in Dharma dissemination furthermore as a member of the Bangladesh Dharma Center.

Thank you very much.



Mr. Bimal Kanti Barua participates in a seminar (right).

Living the **LOTUS**

The 7 Parables of the Lotus Sutra

The Sutra of the Lotus Flower
of the Wonderful Dharma

Chapter 16: The Eternal Life of the Tathagata



The Parable of the Good Physician

There once was a physician who had great wisdom. He was an expert in preparing medicines and curing all manner of diseases. He had many children. One day, while he was out, his children mistakenly drank a medicine that had poisonous properties. The medicine gradually took effect, leaving the children writhing on the ground in agony. At that moment, their father returned home. When they caught sight of their father, they were all overjoyed.



They told their father what had happened and asked him to save their lives. The father instantly ground the necessary medicinal herbs, mixed them together, and prescribed the medicine, which was perfect in color, smell, and flavor, saying, “Take it. It will quickly eliminate your suffering and ensure that hereafter you will never become sick again.” The children who had not completely lost their senses drank it immediately and completely recovered. However, the others, who had lost their senses due to the poison, were unwilling to take the medicine because it looked unappealing to them.



The father felt pity for his children and thought about a way to save all of them. He told them that they should take the medicine and left. Later, he sent a messenger to inform the children that he had died. When the children heard of their father's death, their hearts were filled with grief. The helpless feeling that there was no one left to rely on finally brought them to their senses, and they realized how precious the medicine was. The children who had not taken the medicine, and had continued to suffer, finally drank it and were completely cured of the poison's effects. As soon as the father heard that all of his children had recovered, he returned home and let all of them see him.



Commentary

The physician, the father of the children, represents the Buddha, and the children represent us, all living beings. The poisonous medicine indicates our delusions, namely, the three poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance; and the effective medicine indicates the teaching of the Buddha, or the Lotus Sutra.

Although Shakyamuni, the Eternal Buddha who is neither arising nor ceasing, is always present and close to us, we human beings are not aware of his presence, and are instead attached to phenomena developing in front of our eyes, let our minds swayed by them, and suffer.

The Buddha taught us that all things are nothing other than provisional appearances that arise according to the law of cause and effect, and those who heard and accepted this teaching were liberated from their attachment and attained spiritual peace.

However, those who were liberated once can eventually end up being selfish and going against the Buddha's teachings when they become distant from the Buddha who has been guiding them. As the Buddha was concerned that this might happen, he expounded this parable.

The children who mistakenly took the poison and were suffering while the father was away were delighted to see their father come home. It means that even people who are swayed by delusions are the children of the Buddha and therefore they are delighted when they see the Buddha.

To liberate all suffering people, the Buddha prepared various kinds of medicinal herbs, ground them, compounded them to prescribe medicine to meet the condition of each individual; each medicine is perfect in color, smell, and flavor, and is easy to take. It testifies to the overflowing compassion of the Buddha, who wishes to liberate all people from suffering.

Just as the children who immediately took the medicine prescribed by their father, people who accept the Buddha's teachings unhesitatingly are liberated instantly. Some other people, however, do not feel like hearing or accepting the teachings. It is because they are seriously deluded that they falsely believe that the medicine prescribed for them do not taste good and it must be hard to drink. Those who live only to satisfy their senses consider the practice of keeping the Buddha's precepts constraining and practicing the bodhisattva way for the sake of others to be troublesome.

The Buddha conceals himself temporarily from those people. Historically, this means that Shakyamuni who was born as a human being in this world entered nirvana. In the hearts of people who were grieved and disheartened by the death of Shakyamuni, an awareness of the need to stand on their own feet would arise. To establish sound and independent faith in our mind, it is important for us, more than anything else, to seek and practice the teachings on our own. The Buddha disappeared to enable us to realize this.

When all children took the medicine and they have completely recovered, the father, whom children had thought dead, come home and appear before them once again. This means that if we seek the Buddha's teachings earnestly and put faith in them from the bottom of our heart, the Buddha will naturally appear before our eyes; in other words, we can become aware of the presence of the Buddha, who is always staying by our side.



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Thinking with the Mind of Consideration

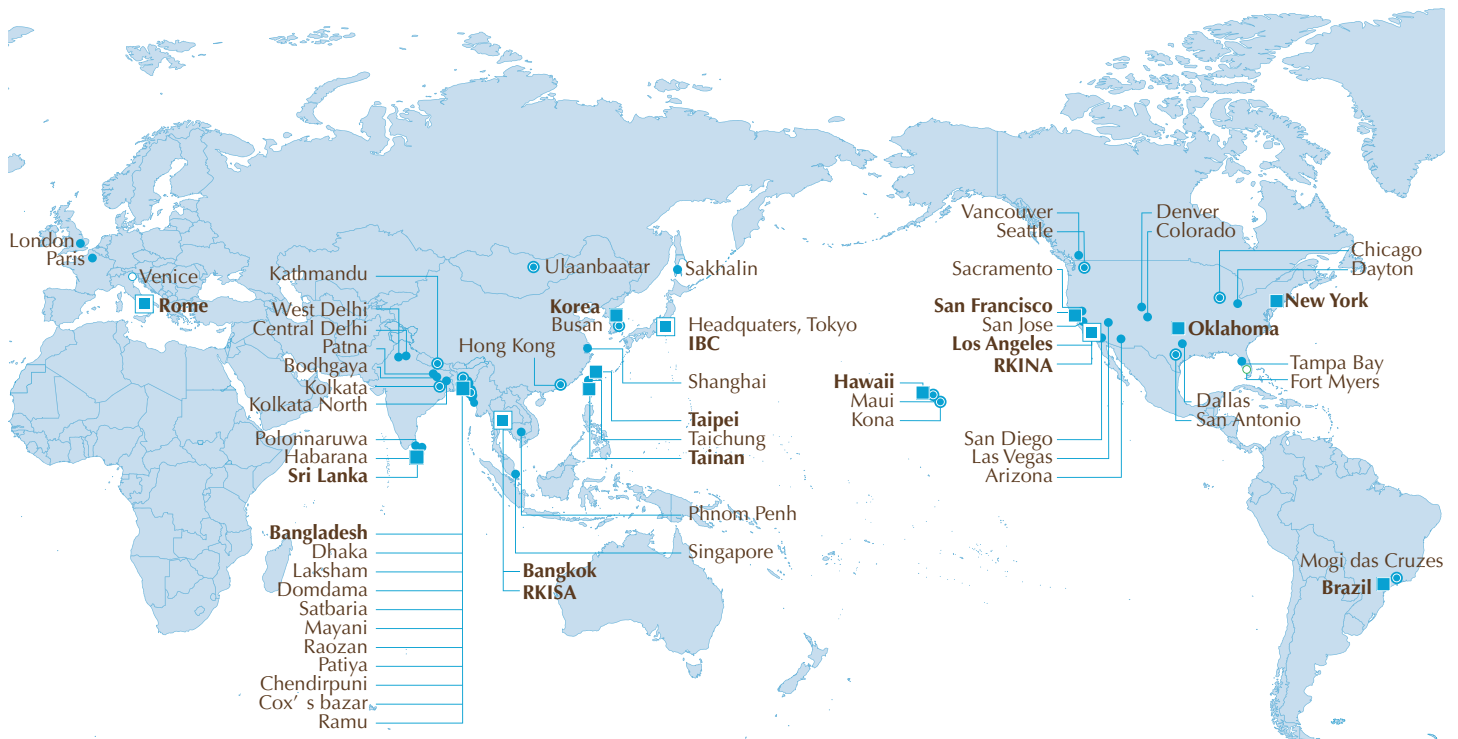
ON April 29, the Universal Gate Day of Rissho Kosei-kai, at the initiative of the members of the Men's Group in Tokyo, sutra recitation was conducted at Fumon Hall to express gratitude for the long-standing service of the building, which has been marked for demolition.

Before the sutra recitation, the participants watched a video of a Dharma talk by Founder Niwano explaining the significance of Fumon Hall, in connection to the story of "Five Thousand Leave the Assembly" in chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra. Founder Niwano said that the reason he had built a large hall accommodating audiences as large as five thousand was to open the gate widely to people who were chagrined to have missed the chance to hear the Buddha's preaching as described in the Lotus Sutra. I was surprised and moved to learn of the deep compassion of the Founder that prompted him to build Fumon Hall.

In the President's message for this month, I learned the importance of "thinking with the mind of consideration." And I renew my vow to emulate the Founder and become a person who is able to think of others thoroughly and wholeheartedly.

Rev. Koichi Saito

Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International



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Rissho Kosei-kai of Domdama

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