The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma

Chapter 28

“Encouragement of Universal Sage Bodhisattva”

At that time the Bodhisattva Universal Sage, with a great divine power to lead people, and accompanied by incalculable numbers of great bodhisattvas, came from the east. Arriving at Holy Eagle Peak in this world, he prostrated himself before Shakayamuni Buddha, and said: “Please, World-honored One, tell us how we will be able to receive the true merits of the Dharma Flower Sutra after the extinction of the World-honored One.”

The Buddha replied and taught Universal Sage Bodhisattva the importance of meeting the following four conditions: “The first is to be protected and kept in mind by the buddhas; the second is to plant roots of virtue; the third is to join those who are headed for awakening; and the fourth is to be determined to save all the living.”

Universal Sage Bodhisattva said to the Buddha: “I sincerely thank you. I will vow to protect whoever practices the Dharma Flower Sutra, and make sure no one, including a devil or some such being, can take advantage of them. Wherever any such person reads and recites this sutra, I will also mount the white six-tusked king of elephants and, showing myself to them, I will protect them and put their minds at ease so that they can practice the teaching properly. This is because I would like to serve the Dharma Flower Sutra and those who practice it.” With the Buddha’s permission, Universal Sage Bodhisattva then gave them incantations.

And Universal Sage Bodhisattva said: “Those who believe in this Dharma Flower Sutra and spread it in the world will receive various merits and blessings, and therefore they should practice it as taught.” Hearing Universal Sage Bodhisattva say those words, the World-honored One praised him, saying: “Universal Sage Bodhisattva, you are able to protect this sutra and help it to be spread widely, bringing peace, happiness, and enrichment to the living beings in many places. I will protect those who have the same conviction as that of Universal Sage Bodhisattva.” And the World-honored One taught the merits and blessings that those who receive and embrace this Dharma Flower Sutra, read and recite it, remember it correctly, and copy it will obtain.

Shakayamuni Buddha concluded his preaching by saying that those who believe in the teaching, and put it into practice, are as precious as the Buddha himself.

When this chapter of the sutra was taught, incalculable bodhisattvas gained the power of guiding countless number of people, and other innumerable bodhisattvas became perfect in the way of Universal Sage Bodhisattva. When the Buddha taught this sutra, everyone in the whole assembly, including Universal Sage and the other bodhisattvas, was filled with great joy and hope. Receiving and embracing the Buddha’s words, they paid their respects to him and left.
We Are Responsible for Our Own Suffering

We Also Create Our Own Joy

When we experience a personal setback or other disappointment, we tend to feel deep concern and suffer mentally as a result. In many cases at such times we suppose that the cause is something outside of ourselves, and our anxiety and suffering only become worse. While we are blaming others, thinking “It is so-and-so’s fault that things turned out this way” or “Everything would have been fine if it were not for such-and-such,” we lose sight of the real cause of our suffering.

In the first verse of the Dhammapada, Shakyamuni clearly states: “Things have their beginning in the mind, have the mind as their master, and are produced through the mind. A person who speaks and acts from an impure mind will be followed by suffering.”

Making comparisons with other people and things, we form such judgments about them as important or inconsequential, valuable or worthless, lasting or temporary, and so forth, and see things from a self-centered point of view—this is what Shakyamuni means by “an impure mind” and he is telling us that it gives birth to our suffering.

What, then, is the source of such self-centeredness, the true nature of the impure mind that gives birth to suffering and worry?

The Lotus Sutra unequivocally explains: “The causes of all sufferings have their origin in greed and desire.” That is, wanting more than we need of anything is the cause of suffering. And the Sutra of Bequeathed Teachings tells us quite plainly: “Because people with many desires seek much profit, they also have much suffering and anxiety.” Therefore, suffering and trouble are not brought on by others, but are in fact born from within ourselves.

The Causes of All Sufferings

When we experience a personal setback or other disappointment, we tend to feel deep concern and suffer mentally as a result. In many cases at such times we suppose that the cause is something outside of ourselves, and our anxiety and suffering only become worse. While we are blaming others, thinking “It is so-and-so’s fault that things turned out this way” or “Everything would have been fine if it were not for such-and-such,” we lose sight of the real cause of our suffering.

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eyes on ourselves and reflect on how our own selfishness brought it about and acknowledge that our greed or vanity has been at work, we are at first apt to become obsessed with the results or the occurrences and become angry or depressed. The unlimited possibility to act and change, as well as the power to move on and further develop, derive from the intrinsic nature of the human being, which can be considered a small universe in itself and thus should not be casually dismissed. That said, we can hardly be called wise if our desires throw suffering and worry back upon us.

To paraphrase the famous poem “The Rule of Life” by the German poet Goethe: “In order to live a life of contentment, have no regrets for the past, do not even rarely become angry, enjoy the present moment, and above all else, hold no hatred to other people, and leave the future to God.”

In Buddhism we have a phrase that shares a similar perspective: “Leave everything to the Buddha.” Never forgetting to be grateful, keeping desire in check, being free of obsessions and fixations—these are the requisites for living joyfully both in body and in mind. At the same time, we need to be aware that we are responsible for ensuring our own happiness.

“Things have their beginning in the mind, have the mind as their master, and are produced through the mind. A person who speaks and acts from a pure mind will be followed by blessings and joy.”

This is the antithetical verse to the quotation from Shakyamuni that I cited at the outset. It does not merely mean that good actions will result in blessings and joy; it teaches us that if we are able to accept things as they are, then even harsh reality can contain the seeds of joy. Such a change in our point of view allows us to experience, at any time, the happiness that is naturally surrounding us.

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A Sibling Spat That Quickly Ended

It was a lovely Saturday morning. Our two older girls were off early to senior and junior high school respectively, but there were no classes on that day for elementary school pupils, and our younger daughter and son were still in bed. I thought they were sleeping, but as I was hanging the laundry out to dry, I could hear their voices—they were chattering together as they lay in bed. Listening to their delighted giggles, I too felt happy, and a smile spread across my face.

Five minutes later as I was cleaning the wash basin, I heard the bang of a door being violently closed, and the pounding of my son’s footsteps as he came up to the bathroom.

“Good morning,” I said. “You seemed to be having such fun just now, what happened?”

“She’s mean! She said something terrible to me!” he said, angrily stamping his foot. No sooner had he delivered these words than his sister joined the scene.

“Well, before that, you said something horrible to me, didn’t you!”

They seemed to be having fun before, but in just five minutes things had turned sour.

“Go on, give it your best try, both of you!” I said, continuing with my cleaning chores, but at that, they started grabbing at one another’s hands and it looked like they were ready for a major battle. However, on that day I had an important meeting scheduled, and I had no time to carefully listen to both sides of the story and pass judgment.

“You hold yourself back, now,” I cautioned my son, who tended to get carried away, and I got ready to go out and hurried toward the Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters building.

Shortly after the meeting had started, my cell phone rang. It was my youngest daughter. Did she have something important to report, perhaps?

I couldn’t answer immediately, but she soon called back three more times, and then I got an email from my husband. Our daughter had called me because our son had developed a fever and she was worried about him.

“OK, I’ll be home as soon as I can,” I answered, and she seemed somewhat relieved.

However, the meeting went on longer than usual that day, and when I finally got home it was nearly closing time at the nearest clinic. The following day was Sunday, when the clinic would be closed all day. My son was suffering badly from nausea, and so I took him in my arms and headed for the clinic. Seeing this, my daughter declared
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, she is mother of one son and three daughters.

She was coming, too. She accompanied us, carrying the bag with my medical insurance card, wallet, some towels, tissues, and a small bucket in case her brother threw up again. She opened our front door and the door to the clinic for us, and set out slippers for us to change into. While I was talking with the receptionist, she sat down on the floor next to the seat where her brother was lying and stroked his hair. When I thought of how much she must have been worrying about him all day, without thinking I took them both in my arms, telling them, “It’s been an awfully hard day, hasn’t it? You’ve both done very well.”

After we’d seen the doctor and were on our way home, just as my daughter had expected, her brother started to feel like he was going to throw up and she was right there with the bucket and tissues. We hurried home, and she called her grandmother, who came right over.

Since our son had started going to elementary school, he had been sleeping in the same room as his sisters at night, but this night he slept beside me, as he did a long time ago when he was little. His fever rose in the middle of the night, but by dawn it had come down.

In the morning, he was sleeping soundly. I got up quietly so as not to wake him, and went about my duties preparing offerings for our home Buddhist altar. As I was making breakfast, I heard somebody come downstairs.

“Good morning, everyone!”

I had heard only one pair of feet, but this greeting was uttered by two voices. Turning around I saw that our youngest daughter was carrying her brother piggyback, and both of them were grinning ear to ear.

Their quarrel completely forgotten, our daughter had just naturally taken care of her brother, and he had just as naturally depended on her.

“How lucky both of you are to have each other,” I said, and realized that this was a precious moment for our family.
The Lotus Sutra: a Box Full of Unlimited Treasures

by Ms. Lin Ying-fu
Taipei Dharma Center

This testimony was delivered at the Ceremony of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World at the Taipei Dharma Center on July 25, 2012.

I WAS born in 1965. I used to work for a bank, but I quit my job when my husband was assigned to work in China. In 2005, I brought my daughter to live with my husband and me in the city of Suzhou in Jiangsu Province, located in the eastern part of China. My daughter began to attend school there. In 2009, we moved to the city of Jiaxing in Zhejiang Province, south of Jiangsu. Later my daughter became very ill and had to be hospitalized. Due to the poor medical treatment available there, I decided to bring my daughter back to Taipei, Taiwan, for better treatment on October 14, 2011.

I had looked into various kinds of religions over the past few years, trying to find a place where I could find relief from life’s problems, and learn practices that would help me to gain right view and understanding of things. My daughter’s illness led me back to the Taipei Dharma Center, and I began to devotedly attend services. I had the opportunity to receive guidance from both the chairman of the Taipei Dharma Center and its minister, and I aspired to attain true liberation through activities at the Dharma center.

Although I had been a Rissho Kosei-kai member since I was a junior college student, I didn’t know much about the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai at all. I just went to the Dharma center, worshiped the image of the Buddha (like worshippers at temples do), and then I would go home.

Now, I participate in morning sutra recitation and daily practice every day at the Taipei Dharma Center. Wanting to expose my daughter to the teaching, I take her to the Dharma center every Sunday and perform sutra recitation with other members. I felt a strong desire to learn about what kind of scripture the Lotus Sutra is, and I began to perform daily recitation, one chapter at a time, from the Threefold Lotus Sutra.

I was very glad to hear that a Gohonzon presentation ceremony would be held at the Taipei Dharma Center on May 13, 2012. I really wanted to have the Gohonzon enshrined at my home altar, but I was very worried that my husband would oppose the enshrinement, because he didn’t know about Rissho Kosei-kai. So I sincerely chanted “Namu Myoho Renge-kyo” a hundred thousand times and prayed that my husband would agree to the enshrinement. When my husband came back to Taiwan in April, I timidly asked him whether it would be all right to have the Gohonzon enshrined at our home altar. Fortunately, he allowed me to do so, saying, “It will be fine, if that’s what you wish.” I felt relieved and very grateful, thinking that I would be able to perform sutra recitation every
I found that when I learned to accept problems, worry and suffering would vanish.

day, sitting in front of the home altar. I was happy and full of gratitude, because my wish had come true.

Then I started preparing for the enshrinement. On May 24, the minister and some fellow members came to my house to conduct the enshrinement ceremony. My daughter took off school to join the sutra recitation.

The enshrinement was wonderful, and very solemn. Now, I perform morning and evening sutra recitations every day without fail, and my daughter also performs evening sutra recitation daily. Things are very stable and steady now; ever since the enshrinement, I feel that I have found something to rely on in life. I have become even more interested in knowing all I can about the Lotus Sutra. Every time I recite the Lotus Sutra, I feel it like it is a box full of unlimited treasures. It seems to me that it contains an inexhaustible amount of riches, and it is waiting for me to come get them. In other words, it is a precious book of wisdom that provides me with guidance and answers whenever I run into problems in daily life. I have been taught that Rissho Kosei-kai teaches actual practices, focusing on filial piety, ancestor veneration, and bodhisattva deeds.

I have noticed that even when I encounter tough problems, I can change my mental attitude. I would like to be diligent in practice, in accord with the teaching of the Buddha and the Founder. When I made an effort to frankly view problems as phenomena given to me as part of the Buddha’s arrangement, I felt relief and joy. I found that when I learned to accept problems, worry and suffering would vanish.

I vow to continuously dedicate myself to the dissemination of the teaching, so that people around me will believe and understand the Dharma. Aspiring for the happiness of others, I would also like to continue studying the Lotus Sutra deeply and practice the teachings of the sutra diligently, keeping the words in mind—“Make myself the light, make the Dharma my light.”
Buddha Dharma Is the Assurance of Happiness

LAST month, I attended the South Asia Lotus Sutra Seminar in Bangkok, as well as the East Asia Training Seminar in Taipei. I was happy to share the joy of the Dharma with participants from various Asian countries.

Having the opportunity to meet with many people from around the world has helped me to realize that we human beings are essentially the same, even though we may differ in nationality, race, and culture. We are all caused to live by the Truth; and the true nature of reality is that everything is constantly changing and that all things are interconnected. This means that things do not always happen as we may wish. While every person in the world hopes to find happiness, few of us recognize the way that leads to real happiness in life. Instead, we create our own suffering.

The teaching of the Buddha, who was awakened to the Truth, is the assurance that all people can live happily. My prayer is that many will have the chance to encounter the Buddha Dharma, and will find peace and happiness in life.

Rev. Shoko Mizutani
Director of Rissho Kosei-kai International

Speaking with a Smile

PEOPLE tell me that I’m always smiling, and that they’ve never seen me upset. In reality, I do get angry on occasion. But even when I get mad, I still remain aware that nothing good will come of my anger; it will only end up hurting my heart.

People will lose their tempers in spite of themselves when things don’t go as they wish, or when others don’t seem to understand what they’re trying to say. But nothing is solved when a person raises his or her voice in anger. While people around you may become meek when you shout, they don’t really understand how you feel.

Attaining enlightenment means reaching a state of becoming detached from anything, free from agitation, and stable in mind. The Buddha, who had attained that state, revealed through his own experience the path to constant joy and happiness. That is the way of Buddhism, or the Buddha Way.

Speaking to others with a peaceful mind will allow them to hear and understand you much more clearly. So I always speak with a joyful attitude.
Please give us your comments!

We welcome comments on our e-newsletter Shan Zai.
Please send us your comments to the following e-mail address.
E-mail: shanzai.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp

Rissho Kosei-kai is a lay Buddhist organization whose holy scripture is the Threefold Lotus Sutra. It was established by Founder Nikko 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 President Nichiko Niwano are very active in promoting peace and well-being through altruistic activities and cooperation with other organizations.
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