

Living the

LOTUS

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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FOUNDER'S ESSAY

The People with Whom You Don't Get Along Are Precious

IF you don't trust people, you will be incapable of performing any job whatsoever in society. This is because if you don't trust others, you won't be able to get others to trust you. Other people are your most valuable assets.

April is a time for new beginnings. There are young people stepping out into adult society, or people starting new positions at their workplaces, bumping up against all kinds of people in each circumstance, and having all sorts of encounters. What's important is that you refrain from deciding whom you like and dislike based on preconceptions. Especially in recent years, young people have a strong desire to live life in stylish comfort, and tend to confine themselves to agreeable circumstances. However, if you inhabit a

world of just the people with whom you get along, you will become incapable of stepping outside your comfort zone.

Sometimes human beings come up against difficult obstacles, and by summoning all of their strength they experience an upwelling of ideas and energy.

The Buddha is hidden behind people who grind you with angry faces and nasty remarks, because such people refine you like a whetstone sharpens a knife. When you encounter people, it's important to receive every one of them with a smile and to greet them in a strong, cheerful voice. Just by trying to do this, your surroundings will change entirely. 🌸

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Rissho Kosei-kai is a lay Buddhist organization whose holy scripture is the Threefold Lotus Sutra. It was established by Founder Nikkyo Niwano and Cofounder 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.

The title, *Living the Lotus—Buddhism in Everyday Life*, is meant to convey our hope of striving to practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in daily life, to enrich and make our lives more worthwhile, like lotus flowers blooming in a muddy pond. The online edition aims to make Buddhism more practicable in the daily lives of people around the world.

GUIDANCE
BY PRESIDENT NIWANO

You, I—We Are All Buddhas

by Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



Living Beings and the Buddha
Are One and the Same

When Shakyamuni's birthday is observed on April 8 every year, bathed in the warm spring sunshine we pay homage by pouring sweet tea over the statue of the child Buddha enshrined in the *hanamido* (flower altar), and celebrate the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha.

On such an occasion, many people renew their vow to be diligent in becoming more like the Buddha.

At such times, however, the thought may arise from somewhere in your mind that the gap between yourself and the Buddha is so great that becoming a buddha is just a distant goal. You may also think that although you do good deeds, you could never live your life always being wise and compassionate like Shakyamuni.

The verses, "Living beings are intrinsically buddhas. This is just like water and ice. There can be no ice without water, and were it not for living beings, there would be no buddhas" appear in *Zazen wasan* (Praise of seated meditation) by Zen master Hakuin (1685–1768). Hakuin meant that living beings and the Buddha are at one with each other. In other words, that because living beings and the Buddha are essentially one and the same, there are no buddhas apart from living beings.

Furthermore, Venerable Mumon Yamada (1900–1988) of the Rinzai Zen School has said that the verse "Living beings are intrinsically buddhas" is the fundamental principle of the Buddha Dharma, and "If you truly understand this verse, then it would be no exaggeration to say that you have fully grasped the whole of the Buddha Dharma." It may be that in one sense, in order to convey this idea to others, many people have, over the course of many years, used one method after another to add layer upon layer of skill to teaching and guiding.

We normally believe, "I am just an ordinary person, quite different from the Buddha," or, to put it in different words, that ordinary people and the Buddha are entirely separate, and we take it for granted that we ourselves cannot become buddhas. But this is not the case. Our hearts soften when we smile and exchange



greetings with people; our own hearts ache when we know of someone else's pain or suffering; and we feel happy when we see someone else's happy face. These reactions are precisely because we living beings and the Buddha are one and the same and because ordinary persons like us and saints are not two separate entities. Our daily practice aims to always pursue the Way based on this realization.

Know Your True Self

Buddhas are, therefore, people who have realized that they are buddhas, and this means that they have realized the sanctity of their own lives and have come to know their true self.

However, just as Shakyamuni tells us, "All living beings possess the wisdom and the virtuous sign of the Tathagata, but do not realize this because of their delusions and attachments," we are unable to free ourselves from our shackles.

About this, a Zen priest of long ago used the following scheme to remind himself that he and the Buddha are one. He would call out to himself, "Hey, master," and reply "Yes, sir," and then ask himself and reply to himself: "Are your eyes open?" "Yes, they are," "Don't lose sight of your true self," "All right, I won't." And such Buddhist poems as "Think not that parting clouds make it light, for the moon is always there in the sky, shining," tell us that when the clouds of delusions and attachments are cleared away from our minds, we become aware of our own inner light.

Speaking personally, in my own case I call out to myself, "Hey, Nichiko" and respond to myself to encourage self-realization. It is fun to give this kind of method a try. Also, just as in the expression, "Buddha-seeds sprout through karmic connections," you also feel cheerful when you hear kind words of encouragement coming from members of the sangha (friends in the faith), such as those spoken during *hoza* sessions, for instance, and come into contact with kindness and cheerfulness not found in yourself. That happens because your buddha-nature is responding to them. In a manner of speaking, this is because a buddha is preaching the Dharma to a buddha, and together they are seeking the Way. In the words of Zen master Ryokan (1758–1831), "All living beings have the same oneness as ordinary persons and saints do, and they all have the buddha-nature. When you pay homage to all living beings as intrinsically buddha-body, you are a person who is advancing toward becoming a buddha."

Know your true self. Realize the oneness of living beings and the Buddha. These form the theme of our lives. Just as the Buddha Way is described as the supreme Way, however, it is human nature that once we begin to understand the Way, we cannot help but be more diligent in pursuing it endlessly. For a living being with a mind, this is the working of the buddha-nature. 

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Sorrow Is a Gift from the Buddha

by Mr. Sahan Chamara Dingathanthirige,
Sri Lanka Dharma Center

This speech of spiritual experience was delivered during the ceremony when Rev. Kosho Niwano, president-designate of Rissho Kosei-kai, visited the Sri Lanka Dharma Center on October 23, 2015. Mr. Sahan is going to enroll in the overseas course of Gakurin seminary in April, 2016.

I am Sahan Chamara. I was born on May 23, 1994, in Welmilla in Sri Lanka. The name of my father is Chandana Pushpakumara, and my mother is Dipika Damayanthi. I am the oldest of three brothers.

We have a small house with a living room, kitchen, and another room. My father works as a car repairman. We have never had any money to spare, but we have been very happy to live with five family members.

I was interested in dance and music from my childhood, and gradually started to dance and play music in front of people. I was invited to neighbors' houses when they held wedding parties or invited a Buddhist monk to listen to him preach. I began to earn money by dancing and playing music. I stopped receiving pocket money from my parents when I was fourteen years old, and I started to do things for myself.

In addition to dancing, I had studied as an army cadet and also had been in training as a Boy Scout in school. During such busy days, I passed the exam of the Ordinary Level, the graduation exam of junior high school, as well as the entrance exam of high school. Thereafter I took the exam of the Advanced Level, the standardized preliminary exam for university applicants, and I added the subject of dance to the exam.

One day, Amila, a relative of mine, said to me, "Why don't you come with me to a Buddhist organization at Papiliyana?" I visited the Sri Lanka Dharma Center of Rissho Kosei-kai for the first time. I met Ms. Ruklanthi Nisansala there.

At the time, some members were preparing for the Vesak festival of 2011 at the Dharma center. Ruklanthi asked me to help her decorate the wall, and I did it until late in the evening.

Ruklanthi said to me, "This is your first day, but I asked too much today. Have you come to dislike Rissho Kosei-kai?" She was concerned about me and

said, "Wouldn't you like to come here again?" I was tired actually, but somehow I wanted to come back.

I started to regularly visit the Dharma center after that. Amila invited me to a youth seminar of three days and two nights at Kandy, but I could not get permission to participate from my parents. I told Amila about it, and then he came all the way to my house to explain my parents about the seminar.

My father said to Amila, "Sahan is not a kind of boy who can stick it out until he achieves something. He may come back home on the way to Kandy. It could cause you trouble." But he finally granted his permission to participate in the seminar.

I went to Kandy by car with Rev. Yoshihisa Yamamoto, who is the minister of the Dharma center, his wife, and Amila. The other participants went there in advance. I met Rev. Yamamoto on that day for the first time, and I was able to talk quite a bit in the car with him.

I became friendly with the other members at the seminar. I took lectures during the daytime, and sang and danced at night with them. I experienced sutra recitation for the first time. I could not understand the meaning of the sutra and the contents of the lectures at all, but I could participate in the seminar by acting with the other youth members.



Mr. Sahan Chamara Dingathanthirige shares his spiritual experience during the ceremony when Rev. Kosho Niwano, president-designate of Rissho Kosei-kai, visited the Sri Lanka Dharma Center.

Spiritual Journey

It is important for me to accept the fact that I did not pass the exam of Gakurin seminary as a gift from the Buddha in order for me to improve my life.

The participation in this seminar induced me to go to the Dharma center more often. I started learning the Dharma with youth members and participating in the program of Poya Day (the Buddhist holiday of Uposatha in Sri Lanka). In addition, I began to attend the Japanese-language class of Rissho Kosei-kai. I gradually learned the rites and rituals of Rissho Kosei-kai, and came to apply the Buddha's teachings to my life.

I had an opportunity to receive the locally bestowed Gohonzon, the focus of devotion of Rissho Kosei-kai, in 2013. One day, Rev. Yamamoto said, "Youth members in the Saitama division of Rissho Kosei-kai will come to Sri Lanka from Japan. Thirteen Japanese youth members will visit your house to enshrine the Gohonzon."

When I talked to my mother about it, she said "Our house is too small to invite so many people. Why don't you invite them to our aunt's house instead?" However, I really wanted to have them hold sutra recitation for enshrinement at my house, regardless. Then my father said, "Let us break open the kitchen area, and make a new room there. And we'll make a washroom and a new kitchen in our house."

Even though we had only two weeks until the enshrinement day, all of my family cooperated together so we could complete the reconstruction of our house. Thanks to the Buddha's arrangement, Rev. Kazumasa Iizuka, minister of the Chichibu Dharma Center, along with thirteen youth members of the Saitama division, came to my house and completed enshrining the Gohonzon.

I received the role of the head of the young men's group in 2014. Then, I applied for the Overseas Students Course of Gakurin seminary in that year, but I failed in the last exam of the interview on the Internet. I was truly sad when I found that out.

Rev. Yamamoto always teaches us that we should feel grateful for everything we experience. "It is important for me to accept the fact that I did not pass the exam of Gakurin seminary as a gift from the Buddha in order for me to improve my life." In that way, I accepted the fact, and visited the Dharma center more than before in order to learn the teachings. I made efforts to get closer to the Buddha even a little. I was honored to have a chance to participate in a youth leaders' seminar in Bangkok, Thailand, in last May. Through what I learned at the seminar, I realized that I had not thought deeply and firmly

Spiritual Journey

about for what purpose I wished to enter Gakurin seminary, and what I should study there when I applied for the entrance exam last year.

Rev. Yamamoto always teaches us that we should shine the life of the Buddha within ourselves. Because I have been conscious of his guidance in learning the Dharma, I feel a greater change occurring in my heart, more so now than last year. This year, I applied for the entrance in Gakurin seminary again. I want to share with you my experience of guiding others to the faith, which I wrote in the document when I applied for it.

I have a twenty-year-old friend named Nareen. He lives with his parents and two younger sisters. He started seeing a girl, but she didn't seem to be a good person. I told Nareen how I felt about the girl, but he had fallen in love with her and wouldn't listen to anyone around him.

One day, Nareen went out for a trip of three days and two nights with her. His father happened to know about this situation during the trip. As soon as Nareen came back home from the trip, he had a big argument

with his father. I couldn't sit still after hearing it, and visited him at his house. He told me everything. He said, "I went on a trip with her, but we separated when we came back." He was very depressed, because he was yelled at by his parents and had separated from her. Due to the shock, he shut himself in his house and refused to go to work.

Nareen bought a motor bike on a loan, but he had spent all his salary on the girl, and had defaulted on paying for the bike for four months. As a result, his motor bike was seized by the loan company. Nareen was depressed even more by that. I tried to drop in at his house on my way back home from work every day and listen to the voice of his heart as Rev. Yamamoto had taught me. After a month passed, he was starting to look better, little by little. I called the office of Nareen and asked if Nareen could return to work. Thanks to the company's consideration, he could get back to work. Then his family opened their hearts to one another and regained a peaceful family, as it had been.

I was able to help my friend find relief from suffering thanks to the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai. Thanks to the Buddha's arrangement, I could receive the opportunity to study at Gakurin seminary beginning in April of 2016. I learned the Buddha's teachings at Rissho Kosei-kai, and my life changed. I believe that it is because I came to apply the teachings to my way of life. We encounter various kinds of sorrows, but I think we should accept them as the arrangement of the Buddha, improving our lives through learning something from them.

I would like to vow to learn the Dharma more concretely and deeply at Gakurin seminary, applying it to my life and sharing the teachings with people around me to liberate them from suffering.

Rissho Kosei-kai is a place to make our own lives better. I believe that we are under the compassion of the Sangha and the protection of the Buddha. I would like to conclude my speech by expressing my gratitude to Amila who guided me to Rissho Kosei-kai. 🌸



Mr. Sahan Chamara Dingathanthirige (middle) offers school supplies to 150 students of Okkanpitiya Wijayabahu School in the city of Monaragala as the support of Rissho Kosei-kai's Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace.

Living the
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Child Care *lifeline*

Every day I get angry at my daughter, who is a second grader in elementary school, because she is late when she gets ready for school.



My daughter, who is a second grader in elementary school, has a hard time getting ready for school in the morning. So beforehand, I urge her to get moving, saying, “Hurry up and do such-and-such!” or “You haven’t done such-and-such yet!” Then she talks back to me, saying, “Mom, be quiet!” When I hear her words, I get angry and shout at her in spite of myself, “OK, then. I’ll never say anything again.” Day after day, it’s the same thing over and over.



A If you interfere in your daughter’s intention to take action just before she is going to do something, she will lose her motivation, and won’t be able to act unless she is urged to do so. Eventually, she is likely to become the kind of child that might not be able to do anything unless she is toled.

One of the most important things a parent can do is foster a child’s independence, so the child can think and act for himself or herself. To foster independence in a child, it is better to let them make their own decisions. While watching out for children, parents should not constantly lend them a hand or interfere in their affairs. It takes patience and effort for parents to handle these situations.

In raising children, it is important for parents to maintain contact with their children in a way that helps them to think for themselves, to try things on their own, or to realize for themselves. It is more important for parents to do this than to simply teach children what to do. In order to have such contact, it would be good to ask children questions, for example: “When do you change your clothes?” “How long have you been playing the game?” or “How about such-and-such a thing?”

Human offspring are born with the ability to make efforts. Children may experience bitter disappoint-



ment, or a sense of frustration with occasional failures. It is important for parents to be at ease with themselves when this happens, watching their children with the belief that such experiences will be precious and indispensable to foster their independence.

(Answers provided by the Tokyo Research Institute for Family Education)

The Tokyo Research Institute for Family Education cooperates with us in producing this regular column. The institute believes that if parents change their thinking and behavior for the better, so will their children. The institute offers lectures and seminars for parents in various areas of Japan and in other countries, as well as giving personal advice to parents on childrearing. For decades, the institute’s programs have helped parents with childrearing problems grow spiritually with their children to create harmonious, happy homes.

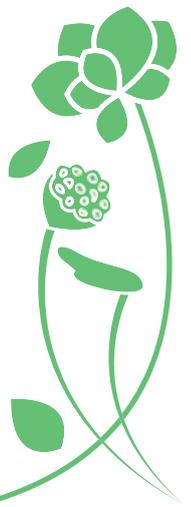
The Buddha Is I, Myself

WHENEVER I put my palms together in front of the Buddha statue at a Dharma center or at home, I am filled with a deep sense of peace and gratitude. Founder Niwano taught us that the Buddha is actually you, yourself. Being astonished with this Buddhist perspective (which I never had at all before joining Rissho Kosei-kai), I felt my mind expanding, and filling with a very warm feeling. One's true self is the Buddha, the great life of the universe, and one with all beings. And its essence is filled with wisdom and compassion.

Even when we feel glad and sad in turns, comparing ourselves with others or encountering various events, we are one with the Buddha. The moment we focus our thought on this truth, our minds will expand over to the universe, a smile will come over our faces, and our hearts will be filled with a sense of kindness and happiness.

The Rissho Kosei-kai world sangha will be gathered at the Great Sacred Hall next month to commemorate the 110th anniversary of Founder Niwano's birth. I wish to make this assembly the opportunity of spreading the awakening to the preciousness of oneself and all beings far and wide around the world.

REV. SHOKO MIZUTANI
Director of Rissho Kosei-kai International



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Rissho Kosei-kai of Satbaria

Satbaria, Hajirpara, Chandanish, Chittagong, Bangladesh

Rissho Kosei-kai of Laksham

Dupchar (West Para), Bhora Jatgat pur, Laksham, Comilla,
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Rissho Kosei-kai of Raozan

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Rissho Kosei-kai of Chendirpuni

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