

Living the

LOTUS

Buddhism in Everyday Life

5
2016

VOL. 128



FOUNDER'S ESSAY

Softening a Person's Hardened Heart

IT'S impossible to scold a disobedient and stubbornly rebellious child into compliance, even though you may try. A child feels that if he or she doesn't rebel, feelings of weakness or loneliness will be the result. You need to be aware of what is going on deep in the child's heart.

Deep down, even the rebellious child desperately wants to be liked by everyone. It is only on the surface that the child appears to become stubborn, and he or she really can't help this from happening. The first thing you must do is soften their hardened hearts.

When people visit a Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma center, they are welcomed with open arms and treated with great respect. When they wonder why they are

being treated with such care, the Dharma center members place their palms together in reverence, saying, "You have buddha-nature just as you are. You are a person who will attain buddhahood." Since the visitors, especially those with hardened hearts, have never been shown reverence or anything like it by others, they are all surprised, and for the first time they realize "I must not remain the way I am."

You can't force closed-minded people onto the path against their will. If they only awaken to their buddha-nature, they will get a new lease on life on their own. 

From *Kaisozuikan* 8 (Kosei Publishing Co.), pp. 282-83

Living the Lotus
Vol. 128 (May 2016)

Published by Rissho Kosei-kai International,
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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

Developing Your Own Distinctive Traits

by Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



Very Much Like *Oden*

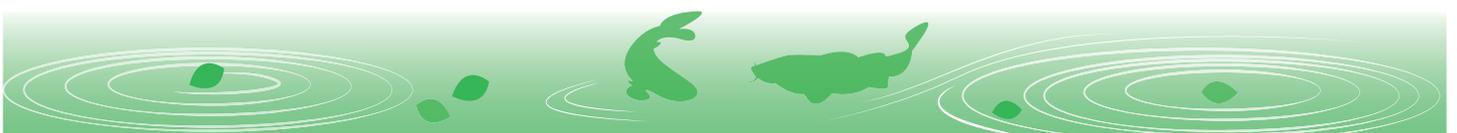
It may be a little out of season, but whenever I hear the term “distinctive traits” I am somehow reminded of the popular Japanese cold-weather dish *oden*, in which a variety of ingredients are simmered together in savory stock in a single pot. The ingredients usually include sliced *daikon* radish, deep-fried tofu, hard-boiled eggs, and others that would be unfamiliar to most non-Japanese. Cooking together in the one pot, the various items bring out the special flavor of each as they develop their own distinctive traits. I think the pot of *oden* is similar to society in general and our individual lifestyles.

Incidentally, when we speak of distinctive traits or personality what we mean in many cases are the outstanding talents or strengths of an individual. Of course, those may be worth special attention. But if that is all we have in mind, then we would also be saying that people who have no exceptional talent also have no distinctive traits or personality. Some people do not know what their own distinctive traits are. They lack self-confidence and suffer from low personal esteem. Many of them may be overly concerned about their perceived lack of distinctive personality traits, and think about this obsessively.

As I am also someone who has worried considerably over finding the answer to the question, “What am I?” I can well understand how it feels to be frustrated and troubled by this. However, while realizing your own distinctive traits can certainly be difficult, you might not be able to determine them even if you shut yourself alone in a room and ponder the subject.

If you really want to know yourself, I think it is good to get out and interact with other people, such as enjoying some physical activity together. In that way you can find something that you genuinely like doing and can feel confident about. In other words, your distinctive traits are revealed through various encounters.

Let us return to the discussion of *oden*. None of the ingredients in the dish has a very strong flavor or aroma. They are rather plain. But after they have been simmered together in the same pot, the fish cake’s fluffy texture comes to life, the



daikon radish's tart sweetness is drawn out, and each ingredient's distinctive traits and what we might call their personality are developed. We could say that each of them has distinctive traits that are in large part revealed by the interaction in the *oden* pot.

The Savory Stock Is Decisive

Fumiko Hama (b. 1945) has written a poem called "The Flower in the Field." It reads:

"Simply standing there, / It gives rest to an insect. / Simply swaying there, / It releases its fragrance. / When the wind blows, / Its seeds scatter. / One leaf, one flower, / Living / In one fixed place. / And inside that ring of petals, / Is the full circle of life / Of the flower. / All the more so with people— / Simply being a friend is happiness. / Simply being a parent is noble. / Simply being a child is a source of gratitude. / Simply being a husband, / And simply being a wife, / Is touching."

We are like the flower described, not only in our innate abilities but in the fact that just by existing we are already developing our distinctive traits—and this is true of each and every one of us. Through this realization, not only regarding your own self-esteem, but when you consider other people, too, you will be able to have the rich perspective of knowing that simply being a friend equals happiness.

This is not merely a technique, such as regarding someone's weaknesses as strengths, but rather genuine praise for someone as a person of consequence who has weaknesses as well as strengths, and a warm regard that supports that person's whole being. In the end, your distinctive traits are, ultimately, produced by your own nature and therefore, the fact that you already have eyes and a mind that allow you to see things honestly is, I think, one of the distinctive traits intrinsic to us as human beings. Engaging in bodhisattva practices without self-interest for the sake of society and of other people is also a distinctive trait that we can develop ourselves. An image something like this comes to my mind: our distinctive trait of showing consideration for others absorbs the essence of the savory stock from the pot of society and brings out its fully profound human flavor.

I think that in this sense, the decisive factors that bring out the distinctive traits of ourselves and other people are like the savory stock in the pot. It is made up of our brightness, our kindness, and our warmth. However, in order to ensure that the stock is always well seasoned, we must never forget to be diligent each and every day.

From *Kosei*, May 2016. Translated by Kosei Publishing Co.



Spiritual Journey

The Happiness of Living with My Whole Family

by Mr. Sujyan Bikash Barua
Bangladesh Dharma Center

This spiritual journey was delivered during the members' exchange program with the East Tokyo Division held at the Bangladesh Dharma Center on August 21, 2015.

ETERNAL Buddha Shakyamuni, Founder Niwano, please guide me. President Niwano, please guide me.

I'm Sujyan Bikash Barua. My father's name is Tapon Bikash Barua and my mother's name is Maya Rani Barua. We are a family of five—my parents, two younger brothers, and me.

I deeply appreciate this opportunity to speak of my spiritual experience on this meaningful day. Rev. Koichi Saito and the members from the Tokyo East Division, welcome to Bangladesh.

Thanks to your visit to Bangladesh, I have the honor of this opportunity to share my spiritual experience today. If you had not visited Bangladesh, I would not have had this chance. I would like to thank my younger brothers who have supported me, senior members of Rissho Kosei-kai, and the members of chapter "A" who gave me much advice, and Rev. Norimasa Aritomi, minister of the Dharma center, who gave me guidance for gaining happiness of my family.

In Bangladeshi society, we usually don't talk about our family issues with others because we think to do so disgraceful. In Rissho Kosei-kai, however, the members share their experiences with others. So I would like to courageously talk about my experience in order to move forward as well as to change myself. I would like to share my joy and happiness with you, and if it would help you promote your religious faith, I would feel very grateful.

I would like to talk about having my dream come true. I had studied in Tokyo for two years as a student of the Overseas Course in Rissho Kosei-kai's Gakurin seminary. When I was a second-year student, my parents were living in the rural area of Rangamati. One day my younger brother contacted me and said that my family had to move to a town because of a problem that arose in the area. The problem was something that often happened in such areas. My parents and younger brothers left their home without taking the household goods with them, and started a new life in the town with nothing. But they managed to live happily for the time being.

One day, however, my father and mother had a quarrel, and my father got angry and went back to the former house. Since then, my father had been in a bad mood and wouldn't go back to the new home in the town. Even so,

my father continued to stay in touch with my youngest brother. I was so depressed by hearing about this while I was in Japan. At the time, I stayed at the Toyoda Dharma Center and was in dissemination training. So I talked with Rev. Kayo Shimada, minister of the Dharma center, about my family's situation. She gave me guidance, saying, "If you believe in the Buddha and practice the Dharma diligently, your family will be liberated from suffering."

After graduating from Gakurin seminary, I went back to Bangladesh and met my father at the former house in the rural area. I lived in the town, but because my father lived alone in the rural area, I had only talked with him by phone. When he came to the town, he and I had met outside our house. I asked him to come to our house, but he declined my request. Once I forcibly tried to take him home, but he didn't enter the house and returned to his home.

I talked about my family situation to Rev. Aritomi and senior members of Rissho Kosei-kai. Hearing my talk, Rev. Aritomi gave me guidance, saying, "The cause of this situation might be within your mind, might it not? If you change yourself, your family will also change and become happy." Then, I reflected on whether my mind might be the cause of this situation, and what I should change about myself. I had suddenly noticed that I am short-tempered and emotional like my father. I realized that when my father was angry, if I had gotten in touch with him to listen to what was on his mind, he might not have left the new



Mr. Sujyan Bikash Barua shares his spiritual experience at the Bangladesh Dharma Center.

Spiritual Journey

home after the quarrel with his wife. I talked about this realization to Rev. Aritomi, and asked him for his guidance again. He said that I should call to my father every day to listen to what was causing him distress. I put Rev. Aritomi's guidance into practice, and continued to keep in touch with him and listen to him talk about his issues. Attentively listening to him, I found that various problems were happening with my father.

I consulted Rissho Kosei-kai's senior members about the situation. They earnestly listened to what I had to say, and gave me a lot of advice and suggestions. Their family members visited our home over and over, and guided my family to the way of the Lotus Sutra. My mother felt sad about the relationship with her husband, but she held it in her heart. However, thanks to the families of my senior members and the Sangha, she became cheerful. I'm very grateful for their guidance. I really appreciate it.

Last year, I received headquarters-bestowed Gohonzon, and I felt the Buddha's compassion in our family. I felt that each family member is seriously and wholeheartedly thinking about the happiness of the family. I became more aware of my parents' and brother's warmheartedness and compassion, which I had not realized before.

Even though two years had passed since I came back from Japan, my father still didn't live together with the family. But the family relationship had improved. When my father came to the town, he brought many things for the family. One day, when I went out to meet my father, my mother cooked his favorite food to take to him. I was really surprised by her act. I felt her love toward him in that moment.

One day, I suddenly got a phone call from a stranger through my father's cell phone. He said that my father's blood pressure had gone up, and he was resting at his store in the town. I was far from there, so I contacted with my younger brothers and had them go to the store. My brothers took my father to see a doctor, but they took him back home despite the doctor's objection. Because my mother and brothers took care of him, his condition improved. I said to him, "Please stay here in this home whenever you come to the town. Here is our home. Here is your home, too." Saying "Okay," he went back to his home in the rural area.

From that time forward, he has been staying at our house in the town whenever he comes here. When he does, I become so happy that I cannot express it in words. I reported to Rev. Aritomi and senior members that my

family had come to live together, and that this dream of mine finally had come true. Hearing of my report, they were as delighted as I was. Thanks to my parents, younger brothers, Rissho Kosei-kai's senior members, and Rev. Aritomi, my dream came true finally. Everyone, thank you very much.

Two months before, we took a family trip, for the first time in twenty-three years. We had a very good time. This joy of mine came about as the result of the practice of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. I believe that everyone is sure to become happy if she or he learns the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai, guides others to practice the teachings, attentively listens to their worries, and asks senior members for guidance and practices as guided.

Today, I would like to share my wish with you. If I am born as a human in a future life, I would like to have my parents give birth to me again. I respect and love my parents as the best in the world. I'm really grateful to my father and mother for having brought me up until the present. I'm afraid that their favor is too big for me to repay, but I'm proud of being born as their child. I always wish for their happiness.

I would like to thank you, once again, for giving me this opportunity to share my spiritual experience with you.

Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, Founder Niwano, thank you. President Niwano, thank you. Everyone, thank you very much. 🍀



Mr. Barua took a family trip for the first time in twenty-three years. From far left, Mr. Barua, his younger brother, his father, his mother, and his another younger brother.

Child Care lifeline

I'm afraid that my children are feeling lonely after my divorce from my husband . . .

Q

I divorced my husband one year ago, and I have taken my two daughters (a third and a fifth grader) under my care since then. I have been working at a small construction company since the divorce, but when I work overtime, I don't get back home until eight o'clock at night. I sometimes have to go to work even on holidays. My daughters say encouraging things, like "Mom, keep it up!" But I've been worried about them, wondering if spending such a small amount of time with them may influence them in a negative way.



A

Please don't be worried about the issue, ma'am. Whether a child's heart will be filled with his or her mother's affection does not depend on the amount of time a mother spends with her child. It depends entirely on how deep your contact with your children really is. You don't need to worry, because you are wholeheartedly concerned with your daughters with great care and love. So, please be more confident in the knowledge that you are able to love your children in a true and deep way.

One thing I would like you to keep in mind is that you should not be too dependent on your children, even though they may say to you, "Mom, keep it up!" Although they understand you are working hard for the family, they are still holding on to feelings of loneliness. Keeping this in mind, begin to regularly address them in a warm way. When you leave for work in the morning, tell them the approximate time you will return and say, "Will you please stay home and look after the house while I am out?" When you come back home, express your heartfelt gratitude to your children, saying "Thank you so much for looking after the house while I was out. Thanks to the both of you, I was able to work hard all day long." Another idea is for you to leave a note for them. For example, the note could say, "Welcome back home, Girls! Be nice and share the snack." By doing so, they can sense your presence when they come home from school.

As many incidents involving juveniles have recently occurred, it would be good for you to ask neighbors for help when you are absent: "My family consists of me and two daughters, just the three of us. The two girls frequently have to stay home alone during the daytime, so I would be grateful if you could generously help to keep an eye on them." It is definitely necessary that you ask someone around you for a

helping hand, and that you and your daughters don't try to manage everything yourselves.

Your daughters' patience may run out, and their emotions may boil over, and they may also vent their pent-up resentments to you in the future. Even though this may happen, please accept the situation wholeheartedly, saying, "I sincerely appreciate the forbearance you've shown for such a long time."

There are a large number of children causing trouble, even though they have both parents. Since your children are filled with affection for you, they will be able to handle feelings of loneliness and would want to do their best, because the mother is doing her best. Please make good use of time to stay with your daughters, and do love them wholeheartedly.



Point 1 "Do not be dependent on your children, but give them a simple, warm word."

.....
Please keep in mind the feeling of loneliness within your children, even though they don't express it. When you get a sense that they are lonely, please say something like, "I'm terribly sorry to make you feel so lonesome. I thank you very much for your great patience." Just hearing that, they can feel relieved to know that "Mom surely understands me." 

(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.

Listening to Children's Unvoiced Cries

In the Lotus Sutra are described the bodhisattvas whom we would like to take as models in leading our daily lives. Among them is the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World, or Kanzeon or Kannon Bosatsu in Japanese). Founder Nikkyo Niwano mentions the Japanese name of the bodhisattva as follows: “*Zeon* indicates the idea of the cries of the people. These cries are not limited to people crying out aloud but include their earnest desires and aspirations” (*Buddhism for Today: A Modern Interpretation of the Threefold Lotus Sutra*. Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 1976, p. 379). That is to say, this bodhisattva catches even unvoiced cries within people’s minds and shares the teachings with them to guide them in an appropriate way.

It is indispensable for parents, who bring up and lead their children, to listen to the children’s silent voices in them. The Founder says: “When the parents regard the cry of each child—this child needs a certain food, or that child seeks something—they prepare suitable meals, give the children sound training, and advise them on their problems. The parents lead their children in the way conducive to their health and suited to their desires” (“*ibid*, p. 380”).

Please watch over your children in everyday life, wishing to catch the children’s unvoiced cries within them, “What do my kids really want?” or “Aren’t they worrying about anything?” Then, even though the mothers cannot be with them together all the time, the children’s hearts would be fulfilled with great relief, feeling that the mothers do always watch over them carefully.

For mothers to be like Kanzeon Bodhisattva to their children could be the best nourishments for the children’s growth both mentally and physically. 

(Editorial Supervision by Department of Dharma Education & Human Resources Development, Rissho Kosei-kai)



Please give us your comments!

We welcome comments on our e-newsletter *Living the Lotus*.

Please send us your comments to the following e-mail address.

E-mail: living.the.lotus.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp



Director's Column

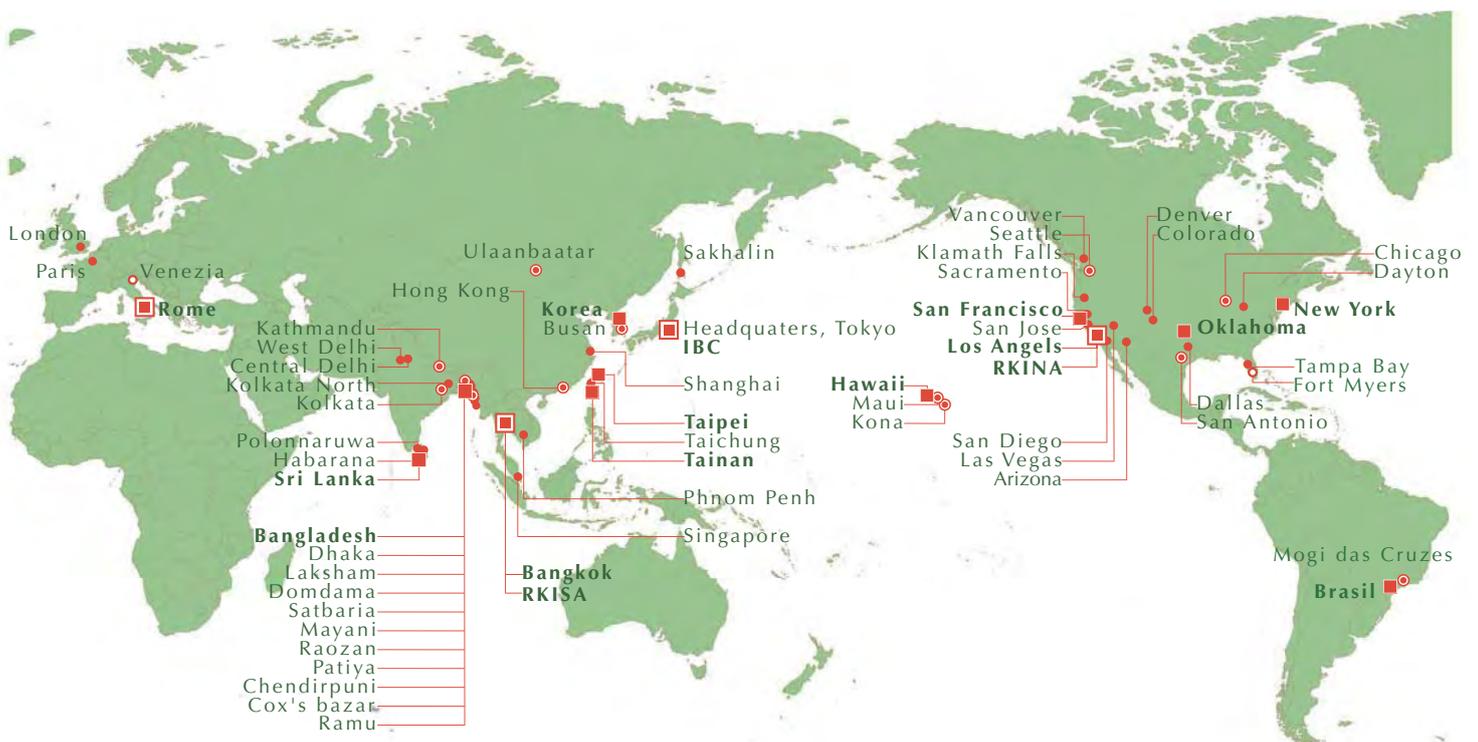
Be Happy Together, Be As One

IN commemoration of the 110th anniversary of the Founder's birth, we will hold the World Sangha Assembly at the Great Sacred Hall on 29th of this month. Seven hundred overseas members and seven hundred Japanese members will join together for this celebration with the slogan, "Be Happy Together, Be as One." We may be different in culture and tradition, as well as language and skin color. But we are one global sangha, where as Rissho Kosei-kai members we all have been awakened to the bodhisattva way of life by studying and practicing the teaching.

"Everyone is seeking for the Truth, or the Dharma. Everyone can be liberated by the Dharma. Rissho Kosei-kai's teaching is the living Dharma, and therefore we are hope of human beings as we can connect everyone with the Truth." This is the conviction that we, the global sangha, all wish to have.

The slogan, "Be Happy Together, Be as One," is the wish of the Buddha, the wish of the Founder, and the wish we all are born with. On the occasion of this World Sangha Assembly, we would like to sincerely declare that we will share the Dharma with everyone in the world by demonstrating our respective traditions and best personal qualities. 

REV. SHOKO MIZUTANI
Director of Rissho Kosei-kai International



 **RISSHO KOSEI-KAI INTERNATIONAL BRANCHES** 

LIVE BROADCASTING ON WEB

インターネット配信のお知らせ

第4回 世界サンガ 結集参拝

World Sangha Assembly 2016

The ceremony of the World Sangha Assembly 2016 will be held on May 29 at the Great Sacred Hall in Tokyo. We will broadcast it live on the Internet in both English and Japanese. We look forward to your participation from all over the world.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with Ms. Shizuyo Miura, Rissho Kosei-kai International at shizuyo.miura@kosei-kai.or.jp.

5月29日大聖堂にて、第4回世界サンガ結集参拝が行われます。この式典の様を、インターネットを通じて日本語と英語の2ヶ国語で配信致します。

全世界からのご参加を心よりお待ちしております。ご不明な点は、国際伝道グループ三浦までお問い合わせください。

三浦：shizuyo.miura@kosei-kai.or.jp

Date and Time

Sunday, May 29th
from 9 a.m. (Japan Time)

WebEx Password

“sangha”

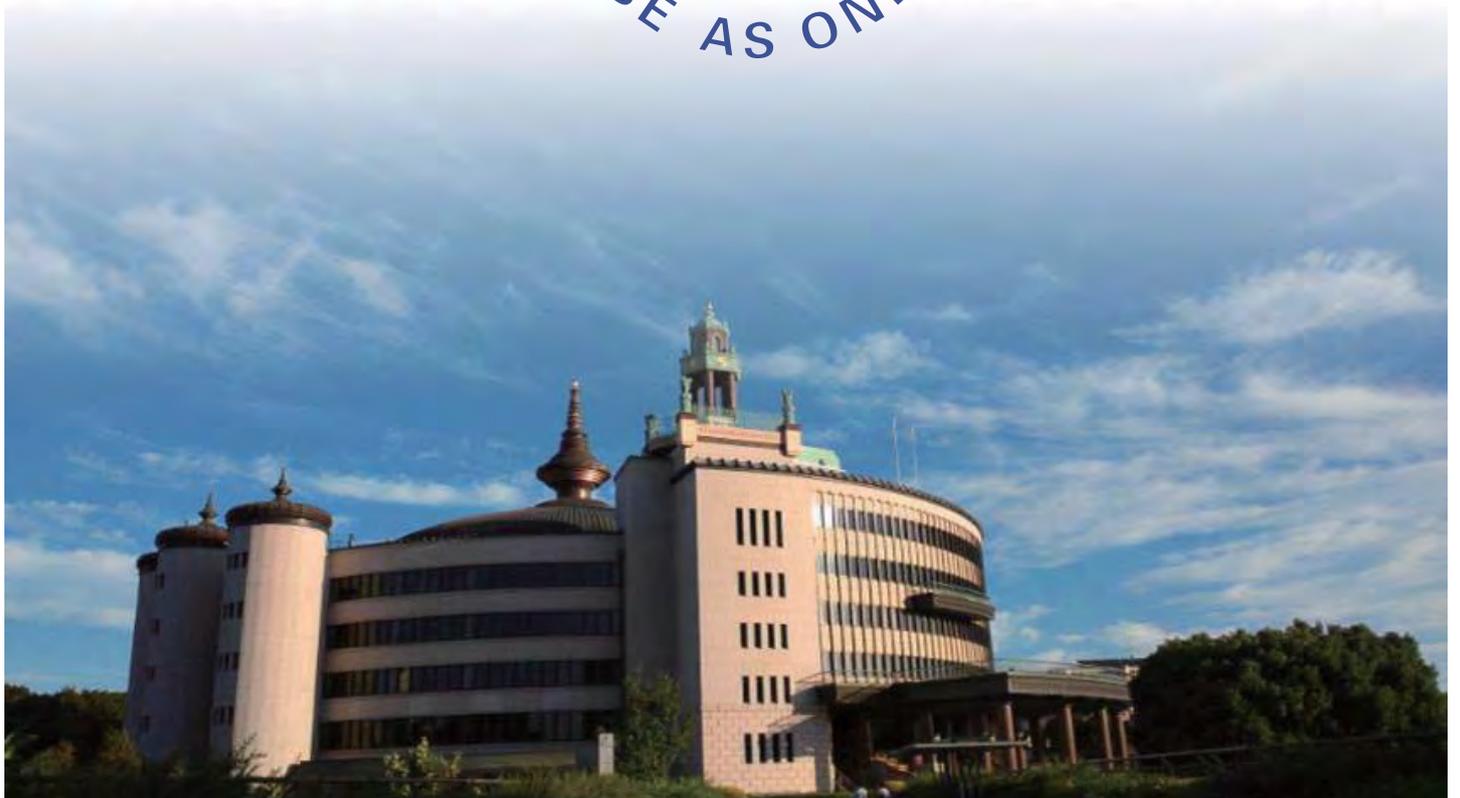


配信日時

5月29日 (日)
9:00 ~ (日本時間)

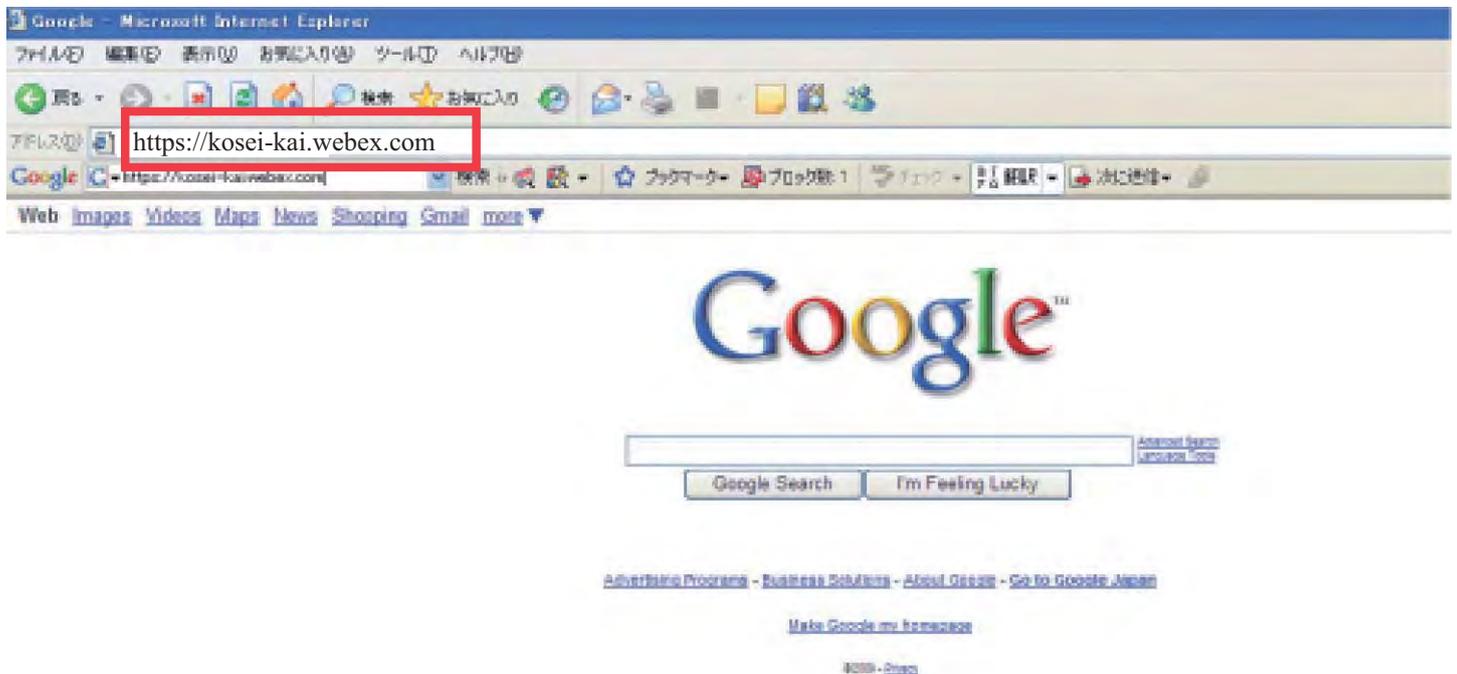
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HOW TO JOIN THE WEBEX

1. Activating web browsing application and connecting to <https://kosei-kai.webex.com>.
The site named “Rissho Kosei-Kai WebEx Enterprise Site” shall be opened.



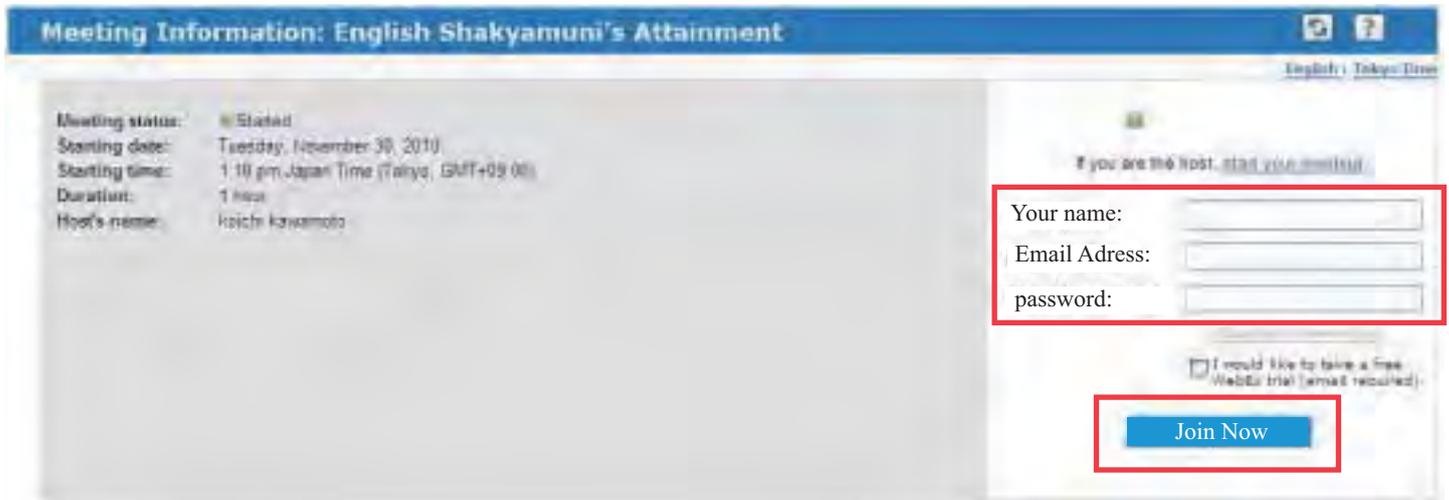
2. You can find two topics of meeting in the “Browse Meetings” in this site.
We prepare two meetings for Japanese and English.
Choose whichever you want to join and click “Join.”



The screenshot displays the "Browse Meetings" page. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search for meetings by host, topic, or words in the agenda:" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar are navigation tabs for "Today", "Daily", "Weekly", and "Monthly". The current date is shown as "Tuesday, November 30, 2010". There are two checkboxes: "Show past meetings" (unchecked) and "Show only meetings that require registration" (unchecked). The main content area shows a list of meetings:

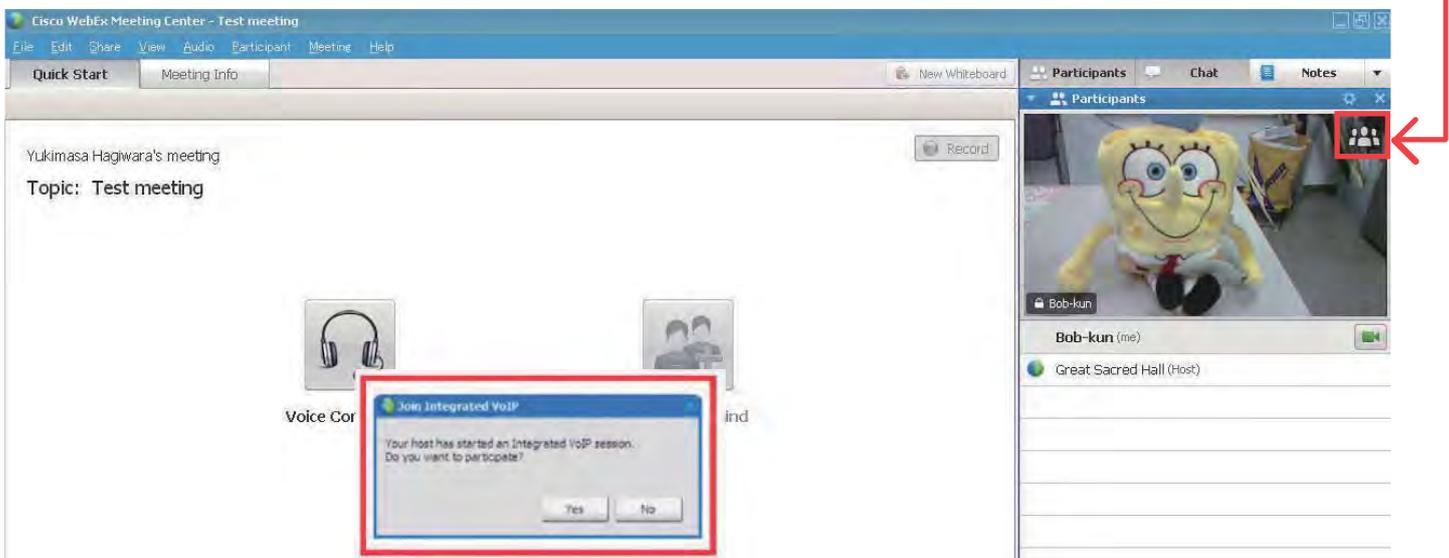
Time	Meeting Title	Host	Duration	Action
1:07 pm	Japanese Shakyamani's Attainme...	Ken NAGATA	1 hour	Join
1:10 pm	English Shakyamani's Attainme...	koichi kawamoto	1 hour	Join

Please provide your information; 1. Your name, 2. Email address, 3. Meeting password.
The meeting password is “**sangha**” for the ceremony.
And then, click “Join Now.” And click “Yes” if the security warning dialog box appears.



3. When the meeting starts, the dialog box of “Join Integrated VoIP” appears.
Please click “Yes.” You can hear the sound and voice.

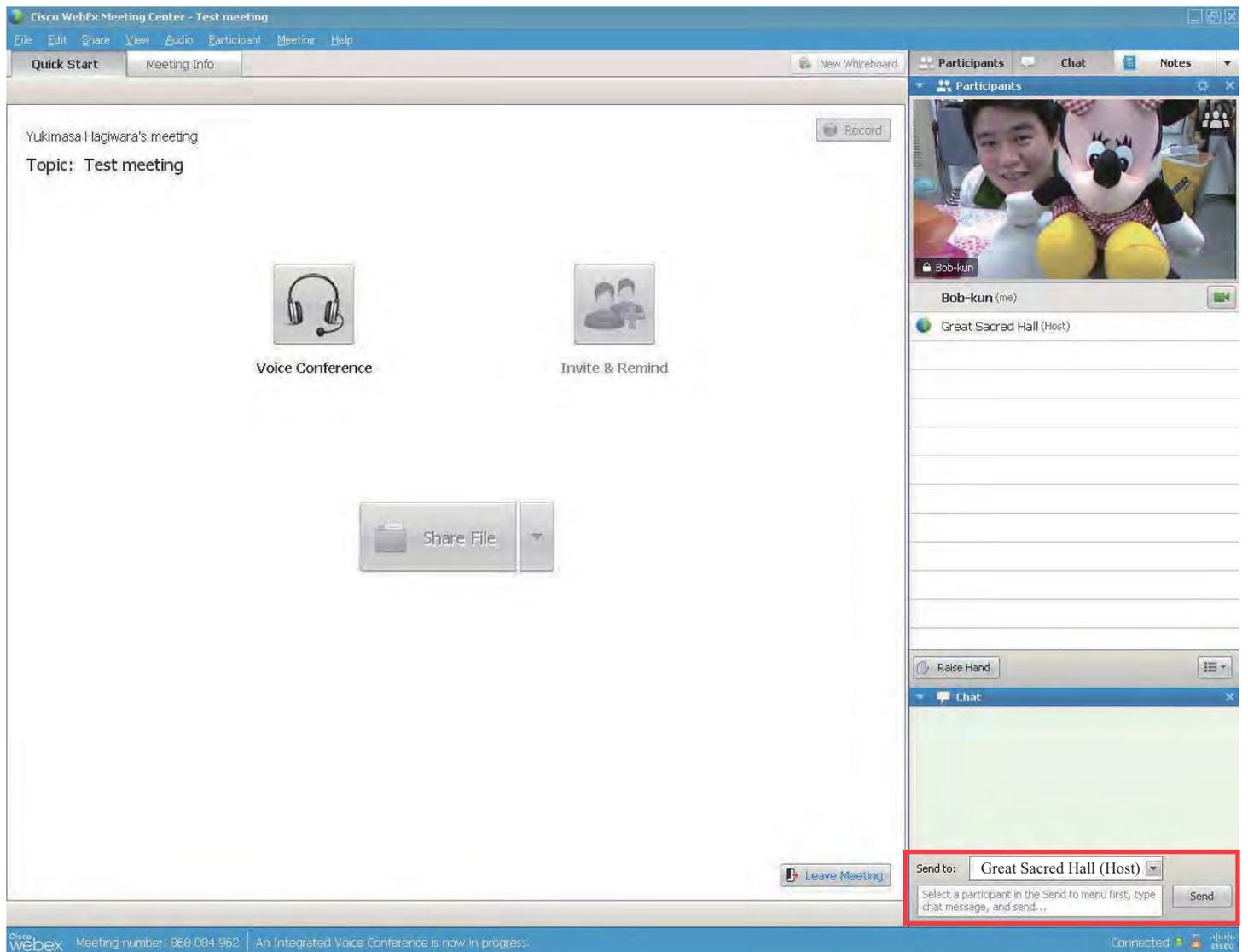
4. You can find a video in the window. Right top button is for “View in full screen mode.”
If you want to watch the video in large size, please click the icon.



5. Right side of the window of this meeting, you can find the panel of “Chat.”

If you have any troubles or questions in the meeting, please let us know through the chat.

We will reply soon through chat.



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2016

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