

Living the

LOTUS

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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FOUNDER'S ESSAY

Filling the Void in Our Hearts

WHEN you hear that your neighbor has purchased a luxury car, or has gone on a trip abroad, you probably can't help thinking, "Me too!" It's only human to think that. But first, you will need money, and that will require both the husband and wife to leave the home and go to work. Then, the home is left vacant, and this emptiness frequently extends to the heart. And, I can't help but feel that one of the causes of modern society's problems is the demise of the home as a place of peace and tranquility.

When a child who has been pushed to "study, study!" suddenly begins to disobey, isn't this because the eyes of an innocent child can see right through the mistaken lifestyle of his or her parents, who are at the

mercy of their desires? Everyone should have already taken notice of these things. No matter how materially wealthy we become, we can never enjoy an equivalent degree of happiness. On the contrary, we begin to sense there is something in our hearts that can't be satisfied.

Take another look at your families and another look at your hearts; more than satisfying material desires, isn't it time that we switch to a down-to-earth way of living, in which we discover something like a kind of satisfaction in dedicating ourselves to our families or the people around us?

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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

Helping People to Develop

by Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



Refining Our Selves

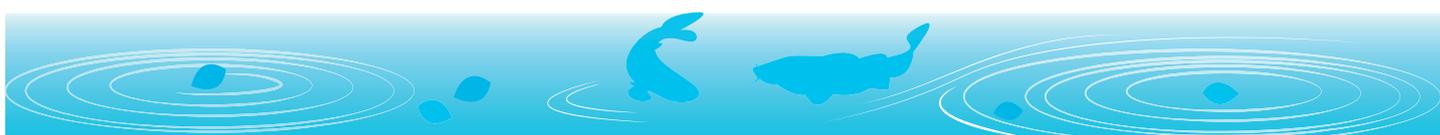
Parents raise their children. Teachers educate their students. Seniors train their juniors and bosses help develop their staff members. For society, and for the family and the organization, too, each of these is an important endeavor. For this reason, regardless of the era, the challenges of educating others and helping them develop can be considered a major issue for society.

Certainly, child-rearing is hard work, so much so that sometimes tragedies occur when one parent, physically and mentally exhausted from caring for a small child or children, kills their own offspring. And the reality is that in an organization as well as in a group, educating others and helping them develop often do not proceed as planned. As a result, the stress shouldered by the individual most concerned can be the cause of physical and psychological damage and lead to discord in personal relations. In such cases, the individual may lose sight of the purpose of the intended education and development assistance.

Well, then, from the perspective of the person responsible for such development, for what purpose and for whose sake is it undertaken?

Although it is apparently for the sake of one or more people, and then for the sake of the organization or the group, I think that primarily the task of assisting the development of others presents a good opportunity for you to refine yourself, and that therefore education actually is making contact with others through karmic connections and growing together with them. When you think that way, you will no longer hold expectations of what others can accomplish that are too high or search for instant successes. Indeed, when things do not go well, you will feel the urge to reflect on what your present experiences are teaching you.

The educator Enosuke Ashida (1873–1951) told us this plainly when he said, “The greatest truth in education is the developing of one’s self.” At the same time, he said, “Educating one’s self is the shortest path to educating other people.” In other words, before trying to teach others, first you should refine your self, which is the shortest path to educating other people.



The Limits of Teaching

Whether it is rearing children or developing personnel in an organization, when we think of what sort of human beings should be the goal of these efforts, I think it suffices to simply say, “people with compassionate minds.” That is, people who can live in harmony with others and who do not fail to always show consideration for others.

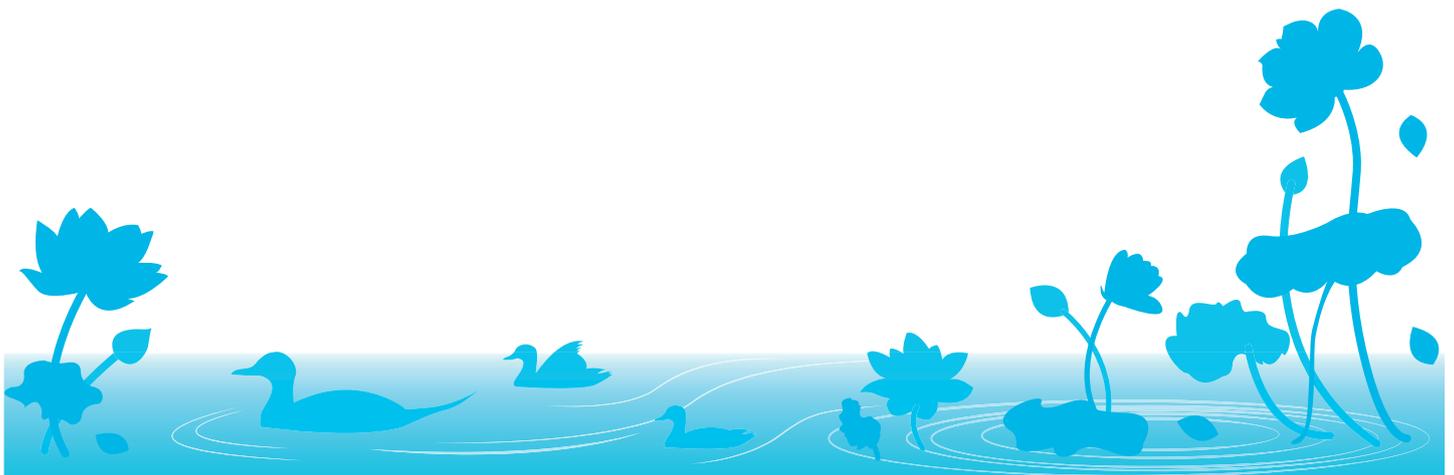
So if we consider how best to assist in the development of such human beings in conjunction with the previously mentioned topics about human development, then becoming that kind of person by making a karmic connection with other people is the most direct route. This is just like the old didactic poem, “Seeing a good person, / I find my own self refined, / As if I am turning toward a mirror.”

People who can show consideration for others and live or work in harmony with them are also invaluable personnel for business corporations that are always seeking to achieve good performance. It is true that when people have not only skills and knowledge but also genuine passion for being helpful to others, they are sought out by many people and can achieve work that leads to the organization’s success.

However, you should be careful that, in hoping for the growth of other people, you do not express your expectations effusively. Someone has once said that it is important for parents to keep to themselves the goals they have for their children and not to verbalize them, but instead put into practice themselves what they silently hope their children would do. Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) said, “You cannot teach a man anything, you can only help him find it within himself,” and therefore, assisting human development involves praising and encouraging someone, making yourself a factor that will help the person develop his or her greatest potential.

In this sense as well, it is important that people responsible for the development of others be humble and recognize their own limitations and insufficiencies. For instance, I myself, when leaving home, say to those in the house, “Itte mairimasu,” which literally means “I will go and worship” and is a more polite, ceremonious form of the expression of “Itte kimasu” (“I am leaving now,” “see you later”), one of the standard Japanese daily greetings and parting statements. That is because every encounter I may have is precious and I hope to learn from it before I return home. I think that repeating these parting words is a habit that refines my self and fosters the mind of compassion in me and in others.

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



Spiritual Journey

Suffering Have Guided Me to the Bodhisattva Way

by Mr. Koji Kato
Minato Dharma Center

This testimony was delivered at the Great Sacred Hall in Tokyo during the World Sangha Assembly 2016 on May 29, 2016.

I was born in 1975, as the eldest son of the Kato Family. Since I went to the Catholic school from elementary school to university, I had the habit of praying before going to bed when I was a child, which always enabled me to have a peaceful morning. However, once I grew up, I thought that I no longer had to adhere to any particular religion in my life. When I was twenty-eight years old, I started a beauty salon. The salon aimed to improve people's health and to provide healing by improving lymphatic flow.

One summer day, after I had run the business for five years, I wondered if there was a Rissho Kosei-kai branch near my workplace. I searched for information about it on the Internet and visited the Minato Dharma Center in Tokyo. Then, I asked a member, "Please let me study the teaching." Though my visit was sudden, every member welcomed me in a kind and warm way. It was the beginning of my direct relationship with Rissho Kosei-kai.

Before I formed a connection with the Minato Dharma Center, there had been a problem related to my sister's marriage. My sister was working together

with me at my company. One day, one of my sister's female customers asked my sister to marry her son. The customer gave her expensive gifts and became more aggressive with her offer. My sister gradually succumbed to the offer. The customer's son then strongly urged my sister to quit working at my salon, and to come to live with his family. Honestly, my parents and I felt as if my sister was being restricted and our hearts filled with anxiety. We doubted that the marriage would really make her happy. At the same time, I also worried that my company would be endangered by my sister's leaving. I objected to her marriage, and continued to criticize her partner's forceful attitude. My sister rejected my criticism and left home. We failed to reach an agreement. We could not understand each other.

When I wondered if there would be any way to break through this situation, something suddenly came to mind. It was the Kyoten: Sutra Readings, which my mother had treasured. In fact, my grandfather on my mother's side was a devoted member of Rissho Kosei-kai. I started reading "Ten Merits," chapter 3 of the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, every day; it appears first in the Kyoten. At first, I could barely recite it, but as I kept reciting, the following passage truly entered my heart. It begins with the verse, "The Buddha said: 'My good children!'" Then it continues, "... Make an angry one give rise to the mind of forbearance," and "Make an ignorant one give rise to the mind of wisdom." It ends with the verse, "My good children! This is called the first wondrous merit-power of this sutra." I felt this sutra speaking to me, and I continued to recite it every day. Gradually, I was able to calm down enough to reflect on myself. I considered the fact that since I started the business I had been an immature manager, and I couldn't listen to my employees. Even in such a difficult situation, my sister was supporting me and my company with great devotion. I also thought of



Mr. Koji Kato delivers his religious testimony at the Great Sacred Hall in Tokyo during the World Sangha Assembly 2016.

my sister's voice at times, saying, "Do I have to continue supporting you in your work for my entire life? Am I not allowed to become happy for myself?" Then, I asked how I should change myself based on the teachings from this sutra. I made up my mind to listen to all of my sister's feelings as well as what others have to say, and to apologize for always unilaterally and unquestioningly declaring my way to be right.

Right after I had changed my mind about things, I received a call from my sister. She said that she couldn't fit in with the life of her partner and his family. She said she had come back to reality when she was told to break off the relationship with her parents, who were objecting to her marriage. She thought that she couldn't live a life that required breaking her relationship with her loving parents. She broke off the engagement and came back to our home. At that time, she shared with us her sorrow, and little by little became herself again.

Things changed unexpectedly. I learned from this sutra the importance of changing myself first. As I was greatly attracted to this teaching, I became more eager to learn and acquire the teaching. Then, I searched on the Internet for the Minato Dharma Center and visited there. Supported by Mrs. Okada, the area head at that time, I came to learn the teaching. During a break from work, I participated in a memorial service held at the Dharma center and learned from the president's Dharma talk, which taught the outlook of the Buddha: "Putting others first." Mrs. Okada took me to the Dharma circle of the Men's Group, and took me to members' homes for guidance. I realized that my heart became purified each time I joined in the practice of the teaching, especially through the morning recitation at the Dharma center. I was so grateful for every single thing I had learned that I gradually became eager to share the teaching with my sister and employees. One day, I said to them, "As aestheticians we touch the very important bodies of our customers. What's transmitted to the customers through our hands is our hearts. Unless our hearts are pure, we can't be genuine therapists no matter how good our technique is. How about learning the way to cultivate our hearts

and minds at the Dharma center with me?" My sister and two employees joined me in going there, with no objection. After the sutra recitation, I asked them, "How do you feel?" They said, "As you always say, I felt that my heart was becoming purified as I recited the sutra together with the members. From now on, we'd like to learn with you." Though I had been worried as to whether I should take them to the Dharma center, their positive reaction instantly made me happy. Now, they have grown to be leaders of the Young Women's Group.

I was motivated to devote myself more earnestly to the bodhisattva practice. The winter before last, alongside Mr. Kawamoto, the head of the Men's Group, I visited a member who had ended up living homeless near the Dharma center. I witnessed Mr. Kawamoto, who had been steadily listening to the homeless member for over 30 minutes, kneeling down so that he was at eye level with the member, who was lying down on a bench in the cold night; I thought that bodhisattva practice is not something easily done. I also learned from Mr. Kawamoto, who revered others unconditionally. Since that day, I have tried to see people equally according to the teaching of the Buddha. A few days after that precious experience, I was able to make friends with a homeless man. He told me, "You don't see me with prejudice. You listen to me while looking me in the eye." What he said made me feel happy. I learned that we can find the practice of liberation close to us, and we can practice it if we feel sympathy for others.

The other day, I recounted these experiences in the Dharma circle. The minister of the Dharma center who had been listening to me told me passionately, "You would not be here today if not for the problem with your sister's marriage. You were guided to the Buddha way through suffering, and it made your way of life change. This is nothing less than the Buddha's compassion." They were surprising words. In that moment, my way of accepting suffering changed dramatically. I was guided to the teaching by the suffering, so that I could change my way of life and put others first. My heart swelled with joy and deep gratitude to the Buddha. It is thanks to all of the sangha members who have supported me up to this

Spiritual Journey

“You were guided to the Buddha way through suffering, and it made your way of life change. This is nothing less than the Buddha’s compassion.”

day that I could know such joy. I would like to express my gratitude to them from the bottom of my heart.

On that day, I was able to openly and easily share with my sister what each of us had been thinking in past years. This reassured us and made us grateful for the fact we are brother and sister, that our parents had given us life, and that we had received the precious teaching. My sister has closed a difficult chapter of her life and started a better one. Now, she is married to a man from England and has given birth to a boy. She has a role in the Women’s Group of her Dharma center. I pledge myself to revere the buddha-nature in others, no matter what circumstances they are in, and to practice the bodhisattva way, cherishing this joy as a treasure. Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, Founder Niwano, and the President Niwano, thank you very much.

Finally, the other day I joined the Dharma dissemination support in Cambodia, and interacted with the young people who are spreading the teaching there with precious vision. I deeply appreciate the marvelously valuable experiences that I had there.

It’s impossible to ask my grandfather, who passed away before I was born, about what kind of joy had motivated him to practice the teaching at Rissho Kosei-kai.

However, now I have encountered the precious teaching of the Buddha and the Founder to cultivate my inner self with gratitude. When I think of the fact that my grandfather’s deep faith in Buddhism is working in the background of my life, and that he guided me to the way through my mother, I feel grateful. Thank you very much, grandfather. I will continue to encounter many people with the spirit of the Bodhisattva Never Despise and strive to disseminate the precious teaching.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.



Mr. Koji Kato (center) participates in Oeshiki-Ichijo Festival.

Living the
 **LOTUS**

Dealing with Domestic Violence



My daughter suffers violent abuse from her husband. I urged her to leave him, but she covered up for him and refused. How can I help her?



The violence a woman suffers from a man she has an intimate relationship with, such as her husband or boyfriend, is called domestic violence. It is a serious social problem. Without more details about her situation, I cannot be sure, but I assume that your daughter is a victim of it.

First, it is important for her parents to keep calm and listen carefully to what she says about her daily life in order to understand her true situation.

Generally speaking, domestic violence is supposed to be hard to solve, because a man who is sometimes violent can be kind at other times. This duality can make his wife blame herself for his anger and hesitate to bring the DV situation out into the open.

Violence is never justified, however. When your daughter's husband is violent, you should get her away from him as soon as possible, because dealing emotionally with the problem won't solve it.

Removing your daughter will not only to keep her safe but allow her and her husband to see their relationship more clearly. You can suggest that she should try living apart from him for a while. Despite his abuse, he is the person she chose to spend the rest of her life with. Then you should give her reliable information about the dangers of domestic violence. If she is unwilling to listen to her parents, she might be willing to listen to others. Besides parental advice, your daughter might benefit from the advice of a third party, such as a counselor.

There is another thing parents should keep in mind. If your daughter separates from her husband, the case is not necessarily closed. Many women continue to be abused by their husbands after separation, because their husbands have not solved the problems that made them violent.

If the support of a third party or cooperation from the husband's parents helps, I hope you and your daughter will pray for her husband to overcome as soon as possible the problems that made him angry. It may take time, but the further development of your daughter and his parents as human beings in this time of trouble will contribute to a true solution of the problem.



(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.

Insights on Domestic Violence

We have gained important insights from the Tokyo Research Institute of Family Education on how a mother can help her daughter cope with domestic violence.

Buddhism teaches that happiness depends on your way of looking at things and meeting people based on an understanding of dependent origination, or co-arising.

Why wouldn't a wife leave a husband who abuses her with domestic violence?

Maybe because she wants to defend him. If a mother wishes to help her daughter, she must first accept and fully understand that her daughter might want to defend her husband.

We assume that the mother's full understanding of her daughter's feelings will give her daughter a sense of satisfaction that enables her to regain confidence and begin to look at things calmly.

If a daughter does that, she will be aware of her mother's love and awaken to the preciousness of her own life.

Through this trial, the Buddha may give the mother a chance to sincerely recognize, kindly and warmheartedly, how her daughter lives.

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

Dependent origination: In this world, there is nothing unchangeable or fixed in form. All things have a direct cause (primary cause). When this comes into contact with an opportunity or condition (secondary cause), the result of this conjunction appears as a phenomenon (effect). This effect leaves behind traces (recompense). Thus Shakyamuni Buddha interpreted all things in the world.

From *Buddhism for Today* (Kosei Publishing Co.), p. 118



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

Sharing the Buddha Dharma Far and Wide

IN the World Sangha Assembly held on May 29th, an exchange session was held between Overseas members and Japanese members. One youth member from Tokyo area excitedly shared what she had learned, saying, "I found out that people's sufferings are the same in nature, beyond the differences of country and language. I also learned that people are liberated by the Buddha's teaching, no matter what country they may live in, or what language they may speak." Her comment resonated with me deeply.

In past years, I have visited many countries and shared the Buddhist teaching with many people. One of the things of which I have been convinced is the universality of Buddhism, which the youth member also realized. Everyone is embraced in the truth of the universe, and yet people basically continue to live in illusion. That is why they experience suffering, even though they seek for happiness. By awakening to the truth of the universe, however, everyone can be liberated and attain peace of mind. I believe we Rissho Kosei-kai members, who embrace the invaluable teaching of the Buddha, have a very important role to share the Dharma with people who are suffering throughout the world.

REV. SHOKO MIZUTANI
Director of Rissho Kosei-kai International



Rissho Kosei-kai Overseas Dharma Centers

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