

The Qualifications of a Leader

THERE are many indispensable qualities that people who are in positions of leadership must possess, such as foresight and decisiveness. But what is the most important of these essential qualities, the one that if someone doesn't have it, they don't meet the requirements to be a leader? I think it is trust.

Without having earned people's trust, it doesn't matter how many wonderful words you string together in order to persuade them, because those words will not reach their hearts. But a leader who has earned people's trust can change their minds with just a single word.

Where does this trust come from? First and foremost, it comes from honesty. "Honesty" is when we don't see even the slightest difference in a person whether we look at their public face or glimpse their private selves.

Another source of trust is the inclination to cherish people above all else.

But the type of person who fawns on their superiors while snuggling up to them, yet completely changes their attitude when it comes to subordinates, ranting and raving at them, is not even in the ballpark. All that is important to them is their own position.

A leader must be the type of person who forgets about themselves and thinks about the happiness of others. The basis of our happiness and success is our relationships with others. I think we can definitively say that people who do not prioritize their relationships with others will never succeed at anything.

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

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

President's Message

Words with a Calming Effect





Honestly and Sincerely

Right speech is one element of the Eightfold Path, a basic teaching of Shakyamuni. It means speaking words that are consistent with the truth, but usually, we are hardly aware of this "speaking correctly," are we? Therefore, even when we are told about *right speech*, perhaps there are not many people who can immediately tie it to their daily practice. Even so, in our daily interactions with other people, we should naturally converse with them in a manner that has a calming effect on the situation. The reason is that doing so is more enjoyable and puts everyone's mind at ease.

Right speech can be understood to mean saying things that are beneficial, and as peace and harmony are extremely important in our lives, that is, as they are beneficial to us, words that have a calming effect on the situation can indeed be called right speech. Therefore, we could say that everyone is, without ever knowing it, practicing right speech.

However, at times we end up using words that disrupt peace and harmony. A particular case of this is telling a lie that helps our own circumstances or giving a false account of what really happened.

In his admonishments to lay disciples, Shakyamuni said: "You must not speak falsehoods to others," and also, "Only speak words that will not give you trouble or hurt other people." Lying misleads people, destroys harmony, and in the end, causes yourself trouble. Thinking this way, the important thing in practicing right speech may not be what you say or how you say it, but rather that you do not forget the conscience that lets you live honestly.

Dr. Gunnar Stålsett, recipient of the thirtieth Niwano Peace Prize in 2013, bishop emeritus of Oslo in the Church of Norway, and a past member of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, is a role model who reminds me that the attitude we take toward the other person we engage in dialogue is more important than the content of our words.

Even when participants at an international conference are of divergent opinions, Bishop Stålsett, right there, skillfully brings them together into consensus.

Nevertheless, he is not garrulous. On the contrary, he is a man of few words. He attentively listens to what various people say and, if asked, he expresses his opinion calmly. Finally, he consults everyone by asking, "What do you think if we did things this way?"

When people of different positions are seated at one table, their discussion may become complicated. What brings harmony to that situation is an attitude of listening carefully to people's opinions and fathoming their thoughts, along with words that come from an attitude of fairness that reins in your ego. I think that this attitude manifested by Bishop Stålsett shows us the very essence of the meaning of right speech.

Embracing Sorrow

In Japanese, the Chinese character used to write "love" (ai) can also be read as "sorrow" (kanashi). Perhaps that is because to love and to cherish often involve sorrow, which may be easier to understand if we think about a mother's heart loving and cherishing her child. Right speech, which is, namely, "saying what is right," is imbued with the heart that feels such love and sorrow, as well as the kindness of wishing for the happiness of someone else, isn't it?

To quote the words of Zen master Dogen (1200–1253), "Loving words arise from a loving heart, and the seed of a loving heart is a compassionate heart," and I think that because Bishop Stålsett's words are imbued with thoughts of compassion common to all people of religious faith, they can be accepted by anyone. Indeed, the Buddhist monk and poet Ryokan (1758–1831) convinced his profligate nephew to reform himself not with admonitions or scoldings, but with tears that ran straight down his cheeks when he thought of his nephew. This episode tells us that there exists right speech that is expressed through a silence full of compassion.

We pay homage to the spirits of our ancestors during the season of the Ullambana Festival, which Rissho Kosei-kai annually observes in July. While cherishing the pristine lotus flowers that are about to open, isn't it good for us to reflect anew on the loving hearts of our parents and ancestors who, more than anyone else, wish for our happiness?

From Kosei, July 2018



LIVING THE LOTUS JULY 2018

Spiritual Journey



The Importance of Meeting People with a Sincere Mind,

Which I Learned in Gakurin Seminary

A A A

by Sahan Chamara Dingathanthirige Sri Lanka Dharma Center

This Dharma Sharing (Spiritual Journey) speech was presented at the ceremony of the Uposatha Day at the Great Sacred Hall on March 1, 2018.

I was born in the village of Welmilla in a suburb of Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1994. We are a family of five—my parents and two younger brothers.

I changed schools twice before I entered high school. At my third school I was bullied by upper-class students, who often threatened me and stole my money. Going to school was distressing for me. I could not control my anger toward them, and I decided to be stronger to revenge them. So I joined a military training club in high school to train my body. I spent the rest of my high-school days fighting with my former bullies. During the three years after I graduated high school, I changed my job six times, because of low wages. But none of them went well. When I was feeling anxious about my future, my cousin introduced me to Rissho Kosei-kai.

The youth group activities of Rissho Kosei-kai were fun and I started to participate in *hoza*, too. At first, I only listened to other people talk. Seeing the



Mr. Sahan delivers his Spiritual Journey speech in the Great Sacred Hall. Tokvo.

youth group members honestly express their true feelings in *hoza* meetings, however, I gradually began to be able to talk about my behavior when I was a high school student; I was able to discuss these things with a sense of security. All the members of the sangha were people who found joy in giving help to others without thinking about their own convenience. In the meantime, I became aware that, thanks to my fellow members, I had also become a person who was able to care for others and worry about them.

Every time I visited the Dharma center, Rev. Yoshihisa Yamamoto, the minister of the center, and Ms. Palipana Nisansala Ruklanthi, a staff member, gave me various roles, such as cleaning the center, offering at the Buddhist altar, serving as a co-chanting leader of the sutra recitation, managing the budget of youth group activities, and planning the activities of the youth group. I was happy to be trusted by other members, and I earnestly performed the assigned roles, so that I would not betray their trust.

Two years after I joined Rissho Kosei-kai, I was appointed as head of the youth group of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center. I was not confident that I could perform the duties satisfactorily, but the youth group members encouraged me, saying "Don't worry. We are always with you." Thanks to their support, I was able to perform the duties of the role until I came to Japan to enter Rissho Kosei-kai's Gakurin Seminary.

At the Gakurin Seminary, I learned a lot of things. Speaking of the things I learned, I would like to talk about what I experienced during my Dharma dissemination training at the Fuji Dharma Center in Shizuoka Prefecture.

Spiritual Journey

One day, I visited Ms. A's home with two members of the Dharma center. They told me that Ms. A had once been an area leader but now she didn't come to the Dharma center. We didn't know whether Ms. A would let us in and perform sutra recitation before the home altar.

The members whom I accompanied introduced me to Ms. A at the entrance, saying, "He came from Sri Lanka and now stays at the Fuji Dharma Center for Dharma dissemination training." I had heard that when Dharma center members visited her house, Ms. A usually greeted them at the entrance but would not let them enter. At that time, however, she was pleased to learn that an overseas member had visited Japan to study Rissho Kosei-kai's teachings, and kindly let us in.

When we asked Ms. A if we could hold a sutra recitation service she kindly prepared the home Buddhist altar for the service. The members I accompanied suggested that I serve as the chanting leader. Thanks to this, I was able to serve as the chanting leader in Japanese for the first time. I was happy that Ms. A let us into her house and prepared the home altar, so I recited the sutra with gratitude. Until then I could not sit upright on my legs on the floor, as Japanese members do when they perform sutra recitation. On that day, however, I was able to sit straight, and didn't feel any pain in my feet until the sutra recitation finished.

After the service, Ms. A served us tea and told us why she had stopped visiting the Dharma center. Listening to her speak, I learned how much she liked Rissho Kosei-kai. I was moved to know that she had continued practicing Rissho Kosei-kai's basic practices, including offering water, tea, and rice at her home altar and reciting the sutra every day, even though she was not attending the Dharma center.

On our way back to the Dharma center, the mem-

bers who had visited Ms. A together with me, said they had known why Ms. A had stopped coming to the center, but for the first time they were able to hear directly from Ms. A about what she had been thinking. I could not understand why Ms. A had let us in and allowed us to perform sutra recitation, and why she had opened her heart to us.

When I was back in the Dharma center, I asked the minister of the center for guidance about the possible reason. The minister first asked me, "How did you feel when you were performing the sutra recitation?" I answered, "I was happy to be able to perform it. So I recited the sutra from the heart." Then the minister told me, "Recently you often asked me what a sincere heart (*magokoro*) means, didn't you? The sincerity with which you were reciting the sutra at Ms. A's home was the sincere heart."

Through this experience, I learned how important it is to be honest and warmhearted whenever I visit members, taking their hand and leading them (tedori), rather than using various tactics to motivate them to come to the Dharma center. While I was in Sri Lanka, when there were youth group members who didn't participate in events at Dharma center no matter how many times I called and invited them to come, I judged them as lackadaisical people, and stopped inviting them to activities. I reflected on my past attitudes and realized the importance of growing into being a person who is sincere at heart, and I realized that when there are members who have not attended events, I should go out to meet them and interact with them with sincere heart, instead of giving up on them.

This March, I will graduate from the Gakurin Seminary and return to Sri Lanka. The teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai are spreading in Sri Lanka right now, with the seminars on family education at the center of the activity. Among the participants in the

Spiritual Journey

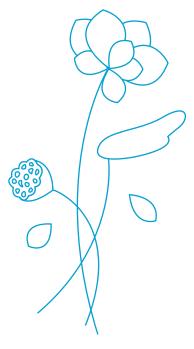
seminars on family education are a number of women who participate with their small children. I want to develop activities that would help children live happily by applying the teachings in their daily lives. For that to happen, I would like to consider seriously what kind of activities would appeal to young people. I hope that I will be functional in developing warm-hearted youth group leaders, who can help members experience spiritual liberation in their Dharma activities.

While Rev. Yamamoto was in Japan for the New Year holidays this year, I met with him, and he listened to all my present feelings and hopes. He encouraged me, saying, "Let's work together as fellow practitioners of the Dharma." I felt Rev. Yamamoto is placing high expectations on me to disseminate the Dharma in Sri Lanka.

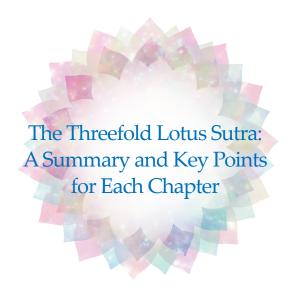
I would like to conclude my speech by pledging to devote myself to Dharma dissemination after I return to Sri Lanka, always helping Rev. Yamamoto. Thank you very much for you kind attention.



Mr. Sahan (second from right) with his classmates in the International Course of the Gakurin Seminary.



Living the LWTUS



"The Threefold Lotus Sutra: A Summary and Key Points for Each Chapter" by Founder Nikkyo Niwano, published originally in Japanese, will be serialized beginning this month.

The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings

The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings contains the teachings that Shakyamuni delivered at Divine Eagle Peak (Mount Gridhrakuta) outside the city of Rajagriha in the kingdom of Magadha, just before he expounded the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma (Lotus Sutra), also at Divine Eagle Peak. After that, he entered a long meditation. When he came out of it, he started to expound the Lotus Sutra.

Judging from these circumstances, reading and understanding the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings is considered necessary before going on to the Lotus Sutra itself, which forms the bulk and essence of the Threefold Lotus Sutra, to settle the spirit and prepare the mind to receive what is to follow. Also, when we get into the content of the doctrine, we deeply feel that we can fully understand the Lotus Sutra only with the prior reading and understanding of the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings.

Innumerable Meanings

The title of the sutra indicates a "teaching that possesses an innumerable number of meanings." The exposition goes on to explain that "the teaching that possesses innumerable meanings arises from just one truth." This one truth, moreover, is the state of "having no attributes," but since the sutra does not explain this in detail, its meaning is left unclear. However, this ambiguity is resolved in the Lotus Sutra, which Shakyamuni teaches next. Shakyamuni explains what "having no attributes" means in exhaustive detail in the Lotus Sutra, and since the teaching of innumerable meanings ultimately boils down to the truth taught in the Lotus Sutra, the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings reveals that the Lotus Sutra is the most essential teaching expounded by Shakyamuni during his entire life.

However, as chapter 2, "Expounding the Dharma" is the core of the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, which constitutes Shakyamuni's answer to the question of the Bodhisattva Great Adornment, only bodhisattvas who had accumulated extraordinary practices could understand its profundity. Shakyamuni had therefore arranged in his mind the order of the discourses he was going to deliver. In other words, the Lotus Sutra is nothing other than the scripture in which, after having expounded the "innumerable

meanings," Shakyamuni has finally explained the meaning of "having no attributes," namely, the "ultimate reality," which is the fundamental basis of his teachings, from all angles so that everyone could understand it. In short, he has revealed the "ultimate truth" to the ordinary people for the first time. This is why the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings is considered the sutra that opens up the Lotus Sutra, which is the sutra of the truth, following his exposition of the sutras of skillful means. It is also for this reason that deeper understanding of the Lotus Sutra is considered possible only when we read the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings first, and because of that, the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings is referred to as the "opening sutra" of the Threefold Lotus Sutra.



Living the Lotus July 2018

Chapter 1 The Virtuous Practices

This opening chapter is the Bodhisattva Great Adornment's praise of the Buddha's perfect virtue and practice for the liberation of all living beings.

Praise of the Buddha's Perfect Virtue

The Bodhisattva Great Adornment praises the thirty-two marks of excellence of face and figure on Shakyamuni's visible body. It is none other than a celebration of the perfection of character expressed in a physical body. He continues to observe that while the Buddha possesses these wondrous attributes, his being transcends both what has and does not have form. This we may take to mean that to the eyes of ordinary persons, his true nature is scarcely perceptible.

The true nature of all living beings is thus the same, though the expression of this true nature in bodily form may not be perfect. The Buddha had infinite virtue, and as that virtue appeared in his figure, all might joyfully revere him, take refuge in him, honor him, and wholeheartedly bow in reverence before him. Whatever insight the Buddha gained, he was never satisfied, but through practice after practice of the Way, he attained his indescribably beautiful body. We cannot but be grateful for this appearance in a visible body, though the real body was invisible

Two points are to be noted here. The first is that the attributes of all living beings are in their true nature the same. All life in its true nature is of the identical substance of the Buddha, but owing to our insufficient practice of the Way and our being filled with illusion, its appearance in visible bodies has imperfections that bear no comparison with the Buddha. Yet if in their true nature they are of the identical substance of the Buddha, it is plain that any appearance in a visible form has the capacity to become one with the Buddha, and so, on the one hand, we may all have vast hope, but on the other, we should be made to stop and reflect.

This thought permeates the Threefold Lotus Sutra from beginning to end, and thus it is important, in preparing to read it, to fix clearly in our minds the concepts of equality of the true nature and differentiation in appearances.

The second point is that the appearance of the Buddha in a visible body is something for which we must all be truly grateful. Shakyamuni appeared in this world, and as a result of his practice after practice of the Way, he became possessed of a perfected character. Because of this living example of one who reached the state of buddhahood, we are taught that it is well if we only imitate him, and we are enabled to pursue a path toward buddhahood far more easily than the painful course Shakyamuni trod. This is why we must be grateful for his appearing in this world.

Thus, as we revere the figure of Shakyamuni and receive and embrace his teachings with great joy in our hearts, we may merge into that ultimate substance of the Buddha as the Dharma body. The words of the Bodhisattva Great Adornment thus imply the right way to look upon the focus of our devotion.

This is an English translation of text originally appeared in Japanese in *Hokke sanbu kyo: Kaku hon no aramashi to yoten,* (Kosei Publishing, 1991 [revised edition, 2016], pp. 10–16).



LIVING THE LOTUS JULY 2018



Gratitude and Harmony

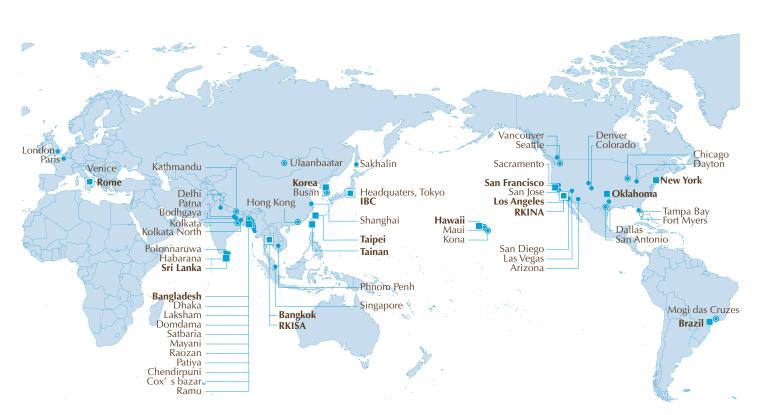
JULY is the month when we annually observe the Ullambana Ceremony. On this occasion, we would like to offer our renewed gratitude for the precious lives that our ancestors have relayed to us.

From the story of Maudgalyayana, one of the ten great disciples of Shakyamuni, liberating his deceased mother from the realm of hungry spirits, I would like to learn right view and right thinking. Our suffering arises from self-centered view and self-centered thinking. Such a mind-set gives rise to hatred and greed, which will eventually cause disputes with other people.

In his message for this month, President Niwano elucidates right speech, the third practice of the Eightfold Path. Right speech means to listen to others carefully and stay close to them, and to live in harmony with others by controlling our own ego.

I hope we would live every day with gratitude for compassionate love of our parents and ancestors, while always being mindful of the importance of harmony with others.

Rev. Koichi Saito Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International



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Rissho Kosei-kai of Domdama

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Rissho Kosei-kai of Laksham

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Rissho Kosei-kai of Raozan

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Rissho Kosei-kai of Chendirpuni

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