

# Living the

# LOTUS

## *Buddhism in Everyday Life*

6  
2017

VOL. 141

FOUNDER'S ESSAY

## Times of Hardships Are Our Moments of Truth

WHEN a couple's relationship turns sour, to make matters worse, their child will suddenly start acting up, spouting things that terrify the parents to the point they wonder how this could even be their child. Some people in this situation plead that they don't have the slightest idea what to do. Yet, it's not until you find yourself in a fix that pushes you beyond what you can handle on your own that you become willing to really listen to the words of others.

The Buddha assures all living beings that they are his children, and promises that he will never fail to help and protect them. Despite this, in life we often find ourselves begrudgingly asking why we have to go through such hard times. Misfortunes pile up one

on top of another, and sometimes we are even driven to despair, questioning the existence of the gods or the Buddha. However, the Buddha never, ever abandons us.

The hardships dealt to us are also the Buddha keeping watch over us, telling us that now is the time to take a good hard look at ourselves and make a change. It is precisely when we are pushed to the edge that we face moments of truth. And these times are the critical junctures during which the people around us have to reach out to us with their words.

From *Kaisozuikan* 9 (Kosei Publishing Co.), pp. 62–63

### Living the Lotus Vol. 141 (June 2017)

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*Living the Lotus* is published monthly by Rissho Kosei-kai International, Fumon Media Center, 2-7-1 Wada, Suginami-ku, Tokyo 166-8537, Japan.  
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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 GUIDANCE

# Do Away with Complaining

by Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



### Assuming That “I Know”

When something goes wrong, we tend to grumble and complain about it. In Japan, we have a common phrase, *guchi o kobosu*, which means grumbling or complaining.

The two kanji characters that make up *guchi*, *gu* and *chi*, both mean ignorance. As the character *chi* comprises two components indicating sickness and knowledge, ignorance as expressed by this character reflects the mental state of assuming that one knows everything while not fully grasping it. As for *gu*, this character contains the meaning of the dullness of slow mental functioning.

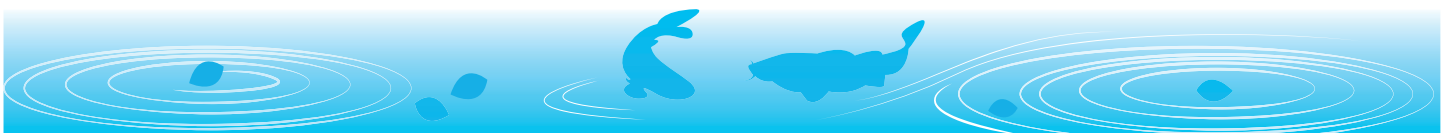
Furthermore, the Japanese word for complaining also means to bemoan things about which one can do nothing. Indeed, even though we know it does no good to complain, we grumble about things being unfair, and sometimes, when something does not happen as we would like, we complain even to the point of ascribing the situation to someone else.

We cannot easily stop ourselves from complaining because of the illusion that we are absolutely right about what we ourselves know, feel, and think. This is nothing but suffering from the “I know” sickness.

### Understanding the Truth

If one of the causes of foolishly making complaints is the feeling that you are right and know everything, then by reflecting on that mental attitude you would be less likely to grumble and complain. Through self-reflection your perception of things then will deepen, and what you once thought of as the cause of your grumbling and complaining can be accepted as a lesson from the Buddha.

If you stay familiar with the Buddha’s teaching in your daily life, when you might feel like grumbling and complaining the mind of wisdom will quell that feeling. This is described in scripture. The verse is: “Make an ignorant one give rise to the mind of wisdom,” and when you can think of the reason for your complaining as “This is the Buddha’s discourse teaching me an important lesson,” your mind of wisdom is then at work.



There is a method for making the working of that mind all the more firmly your own: knowing the truth that applies to everything that exists in this world, in other words, the truth of reality. This is the fact that every single thing that exists in this world is caused to live through the principle of causation that connects all things. This is the gratitude for being alive, here and now, thanks to the blessings of that principle. And when that becomes clear, you can be grateful and will no longer have reason to complain. Simply stated, when you understand the basic truth of the universe, you will no longer be able to complain.

The sutra says, “If those who have great folly revere Bodhisattva Kannon and always keep her in mind, then they will be able to distance themselves from their stupidity.” That is, by keeping Kannon in mind and continuing to revere her, you can be freed from foolish complaining.

When you feel that you are about to start complaining, your mind of compassion like Kannon’s, that is, your mind of being considerate toward other people, will hold back your selfish words and actions. “Keep in mind Kannon, the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World” is a mental expression of wanting to be like Kannon, and therefore anyone who can rejoice in the happiness of other people must be far beyond grumbling and complaining.

If you find that you still feel like complaining, cheerfully cut it off with the feeling “Here is the chance to put my wisdom to work,” or reexamine your mental attitude through your daily sutra recitation and regain the intention of looking at things and accepting them from the standpoint of the truth.

From *Kosei*, June 2017



# Spiritual Journey

## Learning a Way of Life and Gaining Assurance of Faith in Japan

by Mr. Marma MOUNG KAI WAI  
Bangladesh Dharma Center

*This Dharma experience was delivered during the ceremony of the Uposatha Day at the Great Sacred Hall on March 1, 2017.*

**G**OOD morning, everyone. I was born on October 15, 1990, in Bandarban, a beautiful town surrounded by nature in southeastern Bangladesh. I was born as the youngest child, with four brothers and sisters. My father worked for the government. I was raised in a family with loving siblings and parents, and we all lived happily together.

When I was five years old, my mother fell terribly ill and was hospitalized. Luckily, after a week of medical treatment she was released from the hospital. However, a couple of months later, her sickness broke out again, which devastated our entire family. My mother was readmitted to the hospital, where they ran various types of medical examinations. However, they could not figure out what type of sickness she had. Her sickness did not get any better. Three years later, she passed away, when I was at the age of eight.

I couldn't accept my mother's death and my tears never stopped falling. After her death, the atmosphere at home became gloomy. She always used to cook the food we loved, and she bought us the clothes we liked (especially during the festivals), and most importantly,

she was always there for us. Since I was the youngest child, my mother would always bring me with her wherever she went, and held my hand while we went shopping. Each one of these memories are extremely important to me, and I hold them so dear to my heart. Two years after my mother's death, while we were still grieving, our father walked out of the house and left us all alone. I hated my father for that. I couldn't believe that our father left us at the time we needed him the most. That was the darkest time of my life.

When both of our parents suddenly disappeared, we didn't know what to do. We discussed how we were going to survive, as we were still all students at the time, which meant none of us were working. We had relatives living nearby, but no one came to help. To support each other, we started to work as tutors while going to school. My brothers and sisters were always there by my side to encourage me.

I didn't want people to think that I would become a bad child because my parents were gone, so I resolved that I would never fall into the wrong path. I wished to be a person who connected with the people around me, and to live a happy life. However, it was difficult since I did not have anyone around me guiding me on the correct path.

The way I learned about Rissho Kosei-kai was from a distant relative who was introduced to me by my cousin. Then, I became friends with my distant relative and first learned about Rissho Kosei-kai. After learning that Rissho Kosei-kai is a Japanese Buddhist organization, I wanted to learn more about it. In 2010, I was guided to the faith by my friend and became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai. Thereafter, my friend took me to Bangladesh Dharma Center in Chittagong City, in southeastern Bangladesh, by bus, which took about two and a half hours.

When I first visited the Dharma center, I was really impressed by all the warm greetings from the members. It made me want to learn the teachings of Rissho



*Mr. Marma delivers his Dharma experience in the Great Sacred Hall.*

Kosei-kai and become a kind-hearted person, like those who had greeted me.

At the Dharma center, I was fortunate to meet Mr. Kanchan Barua, the head of the Educational Affairs Group at Bangladesh Dharma Center. He is a person with a warm heart and has always treated me like family.

I received a book, titled *Mazu hito sama* (Putting others first), from him. In the book it says “We often think we know best about ourselves, but in fact, we don’t. If you would like to know about yourself, you must cultivate your heart and mind.” I didn’t understand the meaning of it, so I asked Mr. Barua about the meaning. He asked me if I had shown my appreciation toward the Buddha, my ancestors, parents, and those around me for living a healthy life. I answered “no” honestly. Then he said to me, “If you do not forget gratitude to your parents for raising you, and your brothers and sisters for supporting you after your parents were gone, and you do not forget gratitude to your ancestors and those around you and express your gratitude to all of them every day, your life will become progressively happier. After listening to his words, I realized that I actually have people around me who are teaching me the right way to live.

Later, I told Mr. Barua about my wish to learn more about the teaching and he told me about Gakurin Seminary at Rissho Kosei-kai’s headquarters, where people could learn about Buddhism. In the seminary, they provide an International Course for people from abroad. Later, Rev. Mitsuyuki Aritomi, the minister of Bangladesh Dharma Center, also advised me to join Gakurin Seminary and helped me enter into Gakurin Seminary. I realized that if I didn’t encounter Rissho Kosei-kai, I wouldn’t have had the opportunity to learn such a wonderful teaching and meet such wonderful people. I’m truly thankful to my friend who guided me to this path.

After deciding to come to Japan, my brothers and sisters gave me not only their full support, but also paid for all the costs. They said to me, “We support you because this is the path you choose.” Thanks to their

support, my confidence grew to continue walking on the path I chose till the end. I was really happy about that.

Before coming to Japan, I was really nervous about living with people that I had never met. At the beginning, it was really difficult because of the cultural difference and language barrier. However, living in Gakurin Seminary helped me learn how to cherish all of my dorm mates and understand the importance of time. That was also my first experience living with people from various countries. Moreover, my dorm mates are really wonderful people, who were always by my side helping me whenever I was on my duty or sick.

When I was in the first grade in Gakurin Seminary, I was often scolded by the teacher from my Japanese language school. Whenever I saw my fellow classmates speaking fluent Japanese, I felt depressed. At that time, my senior colleagues of the International Course found out about how I felt and encouraged me by saying, “We were just like you in our first year. It was really tough because we didn’t know Japanese, but you will be fine as long as you do your best.”

After entering the second year, I was assigned to the Kita Dharma Center, in northern Tokyo, for Dharma dissemination training. From the training, I gained a wonderful life-changing experience. When I went to do *tedori* (supporting members in the Dharma) practice with the chapter leader, I encountered Ms. A, a member of the Dharma center who had lost her eyesight and most of her hearing. From our encounter, I felt like a ray of hope shone into my heart.

Ms. A didn’t have any children, and was living alone after her husband passed away. Hearing about her situation, I found the similarity of her family’s situation to mine. However, despite her old age and her poor health, she was a warmhearted person and looked very happy. One day when we visited her, she felt my face with her hand and said “What a handsome boy.” At that very moment, I was really happy because she looked at me through the eyes of her heart. Looking at Ms. A, I clearly understood that she had helped me realize that I am still young and healthy, yet still clinging onto the

# Spiritual Journey

grief of losing my parents. It also helped me realize the reason why I was not able to overcome the grief of my loss; it was because I didn't have the mindset that everything was the Buddha's arrangement.

By being in contact with Ms. A's warmheartedness, I learned that the Buddha would never give one a test that they could not overcome. It also helped me realize that losing both of my parents when I was a child was because I needed to realize my duty to learn the Buddha's teachings to help liberate people from their sufferings. Looking at Ms. A, I figured that if I became a cheerful person myself, people around me would be cheerful too. I have also gained the strength to move forward after meeting her. I want to live cheerfully and positively, so that I can make people cheerful just by being present and shine a warm light into their hearts.

Through my participation in the massive *hoza* (a large Dharma Circle with more people), I could understand the importance of *hoza*, a lifeblood of Rissho Kosei-kai, and have been given the Buddha's wisdom and insight.

In the *hoza*, Ms. B, a member of the Dharma center, said that she was supposed to have her husband's posthumous name read after the sutra recitation for his memorial day at the Dharma center, but it wasn't read due to some mistake. Ms. B expressed her gratitude for what had happened, however, saying that because of the incident her husband's memorial day was remembered anew by the minister, chapter leaders, and her fellow members.

I was really moved by the way Ms. B accepted the situation. If I was in the same situation, I wouldn't have accepted it the same way she did. I felt that *hoza* is not only a place where members listen to each other, but a place that helps us to be liberated from sufferings through relating others' situations to our own.

I strongly believe that the people around me, as well as myself, will be able to be liberated and attain a happy life, by living in accordance with the wish of the Buddha and Founder Nikkyo Niwano. Now, I am able to say, thanks to my parents I have gotten the opportu-

nity to have such wonderful encounters and to learn the teachings of the Founder and President Nichiko Niwano. The most grateful thing after coming to Japan is that my heart has changed.

From the many things that I have learned since I came to Japan, I want to spread the idea of "everything is dependent on you," which means the result of your actions will link back to you, to the people in my hometown, Bandarban, Bangladesh. When you cannot reach the result you are wishing for, you will never overcome suffering if you only blame it on those around you, but not yourself. Once you grow into the mindset that you should be responsible for whatever happens to you, the situation will change too.

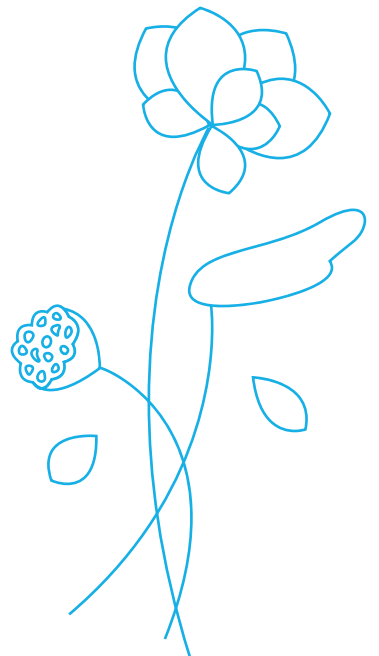
I would like to work my best to start a branch of the Bangladesh Dharma Center in my hometown, so that everyone living there will be able to learn the teachings of the Buddha, and have a place where sangha members can practice the Dharma together.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.



Mr. Marma with his classmates from Gakurin Seminary International Course.

**Living the**  
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# Childcare lifeline

“I would like to change my son’s tendency to lie.”

Q

I’ve been suffering from my son’s lies and dishonesty. The other day, my son, a fourth-grader, told me that he was given a strategy book for winning a game by his friend, but his friend’s mother called me later, saying, “My son lent that book to your son, but he’s bothered by the fact that your son never returned it to him.” And even though my son broke a glass himself, he told a lie, saying it was his four-year-old little sister’s fault, not his fault. He repeatedly commits these kind of falsehoods, which everyone can see are lies. Whenever this occurs, I tell him not to tell lies. Still, it happens over and over again. I’ve been terribly worried about his future, and that if he keeps on lying, he will become a deceitful person.



A

We can deeply empathize with your serious wish as a mother that your son will become an honest child. Once a child tells a lie, a parent tends to doubt what he says, and may regard him with suspicious eyes. Since a mother wants her child to grow up to be honest and genuine, she can’t help but ask him, “You told a falsehood again, didn’t you?” But such a mother’s true intention falls on deaf ears when it comes to the child. He may feel isolated, thinking he is not trusted by his mother.

Even though your son speaks a falsehood that everybody can see is a lie, please don’t get angry with him, crying “You’re telling a lie now, aren’t you? I told you many times not to lie at all!” Instead, when you intuitively feel that your son is telling a lie, please say to him in a kind and gentle way, “What’s up?” and listen attentively to what’s on his mind. There may quite likely be some reasons why he told a falsehood.

You mention that your son puts the blame on his four-year-old little sister. Don’t you have such a perspective that “My son troubles me so much by telling lies, while my daughter is still little and lovely”? In general, a child is sensitive to how/what a parent is thinking of him. This kind of loneliness may prompt your son consequently to tell a lie, seeking his mother’s affection and wanting his mother to pay attention to him.

For example, in the case that your son said that he was given a book by his friend, please speak to him smoothly in this way; “Although you might have thought that your friend gave you the book, it seems that he really intended just to lend it to you. Maybe you misunderstood.” Approach the situation this way, rather than scolding him by saying something like “Why you told a lie about your friend giving you that book!?” And how about letting him


return the book to his friend by himself with his apologies, saying “I’ve misunderstood you. I’m very sorry.”

Parents often say to their children, “Please tell me what happened honestly, I will not chide you for it.” But once children actually do speak honestly, many parents usually get upset and scold their children, saying, “See, that’s exactly what I expected!”

In this case, since you promised not to scold your children at all, you must not reproach them. Conversely, please praise and accept your children for being honest with a parent, so they can learn something from their parents’ attitude and manners.

If children have the experience of being forgiven, rather than being scolded for telling a lie by their parents, they will become the kind of people who can tell the truth with honest and open minds and hearts.

The term of primary school students is the period to learn about what the good and evil are, or what the right and wrong are. At these ages, children can easily change depending on parents’ interactions and approaches with their children. Please deal your children as parents with a sense of honesty and broad-mindedness.

 **Point** There are no children who were born as liars by nature.

Children are often inclined to tell a lie when they want to protect themselves, and to seek escape from a tense situation, or are driven into a corner. Please look back and reflect on whether or not you have had an accusatory attitude with your children, pressing them for answers. The reason why children would tell a lie should become precisely clear.

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

“Childcare Lifeline” is produced every month with the cooperation of the Tokyo Research Institute for Family Education. The institute believes that changes for the better in parents’ thinking and behavior will also bring about changes in their children. The institute holds lectures and seminars for parents throughout Japan and in other countries and also offers parents personal counseling on childrearing. Since its foundation in 1975, the institute’s programs have helped parents and children grow spiritually together to create harmonious, happy homes.



## The Warmheartedness of Perfect Trust

You are a great mother, striving to directly confront your son, with the sincere wish that he should become a good and responsible child. When people are able to touch the warm hearts of those who watch over them, they'll be able to fully put forth their own natural strength.

This is a story in which the Zen priest Ryokan (1758–1831), a well-known monk of the Edo Period (1603–1867), was asked to counsel Umanosuke, his profligate nephew, and so he heeded to his parents' home. But while he was staying there, Ryokan didn't lecture nor preach anything to Umanosuke at all, and eventually the day of his departure came. In the entryway of the house, Ryokan asked, "Would you please tie the laces of my straw sandals for me, Umanosuke?" Umanosuke tied the laces on Rykan's sandals, feeling relieved that he was seemingly off the hook. As he was finishing tying the shoelace, he felt something hot dripping on the back of his hand. When he looked up, he saw that tears were flowing from Ryokan's eyes. On that day, Umanosuke ended his profligate way of life for once and for all. Ryokan's tears demonstrated his compassion for Umanosuke, and totally embraced him with warmheartedness.

Mother, why don't you earnestly and completely trust your son, even though you find that he apparently tells a lie? His sense of easy relief, knowing that he is trusted by his mother, will motivate him to influence his conscience. And your son will be able to begin to walk a new path, endeavoring to become the kind of child who doesn't want to bring shame to his mother, who is showing such warmhearted love and care for him.

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



Please give us your comments!



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

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## My Heart Delights at Joyful News

I GOT a phone call from the office of Rissho Kosei-kai International (RKI) in Tokyo when I was visiting Taiwan in April. “Rev. Mizutani, you have been assigned the role of head of the headquarters’ contingent for the parade in the Oeshiki Ichijo (One Vehicle) Festival this year.”

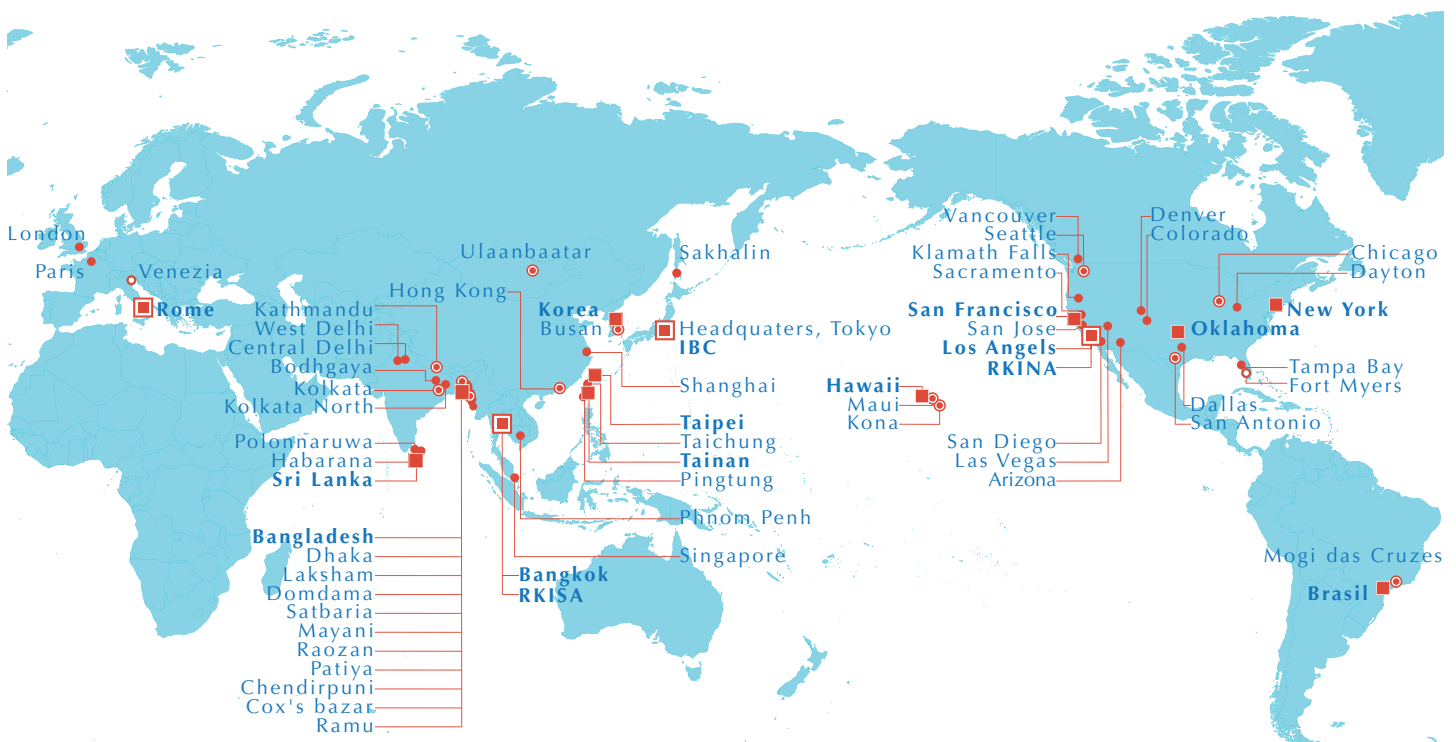
The Oeshiki Ichijo Festival is an important event for Rissho Kosei-kai. We march in a procession of the One Vehicle Parade, some carrying *mando* (portable lighted pagodas), remembering the outstanding virtue of Saint Nichiren, who dedicated his life to the dissemination of the Lotus Sutra and cherishing the memory of and revering the life of Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, who founded our organization and devoted his life to world peace.

At first when I had received the phone call, I was not able to accept the assignment with gratitude. But some thoughts soon emerged within myself: “I cannot take the role with gratitude now, but because of that, through pursuing the role, I may be able to see something new and something important”; “As I accept this role, I would like to do my best to make this year’s festival the most wonderful one ever.” I felt my heart and soul being charged with passion and energy.

So I called the executive director in charge of the festival and expressed my gratitude for the role. Right after I had hung up, I got another phone call. It was again from the RKI office in Tokyo. “Rev. Mizutani, we have just been informed that President-designate Kosho Niwano will visit Rissho Kosei-kai Ulaanbaatar center in July!”

How wonderful it is! My heart was delighted even further with the two pieces of joyful news that arrived in succession.

Rev. Shoko Mizutani  
Director of Rissho Kosei-kai International



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# 2017

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