

# Living the Lotus

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*Buddhism in Everyday Life*

## Founder's Reflections

### Trust Means Never Giving Up on a Child

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano

**I**N order to grow and mature, children need to be close to people who trust them unconditionally. For the sake of argument, let's assume parents are the only people who will continue to trust their child no matter how delinquent his or her behavior becomes. This absolute trust from an adult is the child's last refuge, and it becomes the motivation for them to straighten out.

If you're only able to trust a child because he or she is a good kid, and you wouldn't trust them anymore if they did bad things, then you don't truly trust them. True trust in another person means accepting the possibility of betrayal while having complete faith in their buddha nature.

Recall the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect's practice of revering all people—even those who threw rocks or attempted to strike him. No matter how badly those who tried to strike him behaved, Never Unworthy of Respect saw it as a temporary guise. He had complete faith that their true nature as a child of the Buddha would eventually come to light, and that they would go on to become buddhas.

No matter how troubling your child's behavior may look to you as a parent, if you simply change your perspective, you will surely discover the good in him or her. Trust means never giving up on any child. The practice of revering your child's buddha nature means striving to help him or her discover the unblemished mind that lies deep within their heart, no matter how much it's covered up by negative traits.

*Kaiso zuikan* 10 (Kosei Publishing, 1997), pp. 142–43

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.

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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

### With Eyes of Compassion

Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



#### The Meaning of “Beholding Living Beings with Eyes of Compassion”

“She beholds living beings with eyes of compassion / Her blessings are an ocean, vast and immeasurable” are famous lines of a verse familiar to us from chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, “The Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World as Universal Gateway.”

This chapter suggests that beholding living beings with eyes of compassion accumulates infinite blessings. If we maintain the perspective of looking at the world, and people, with eyes of compassion, to what kinds of things do we assign importance?

In the June issue of this magazine, I mentioned the poet Sansei Yamao (1938–2001). In his poem “Kanzeon bosatsu” (“The Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World”), he explains in clear, simple terms the truth of the Buddha’s teaching, which can be said to be the answer to this question. Let me quote a part of this poem, excerpted from the book *Kannon gyo no mori o aruku* (Eng. “walking in the forest of the Regarder of Sounds Sutra”):

The Bodhisattva Regarder of Sounds  
Is the mind of deep compassion, flowing through the world.  
Her deep compassion also flows through me.  
It is one, this mind of deep compassion.  
.....  
If someone brings me joy,  
That person is the Bodhisattva Regarder of Sounds,  
And if a tree brings me comfort,  
That tree is definitely the Bodhisattva Regarder of Sounds.  
.....  
When I am someone who blames no one,  
I am the Bodhisattva Regarder of Sounds,  
And when you are someone who forgives me,  
You are the revered Bodhisattva Regarder of Sounds.  
The Bodhisattva Regarder of Sounds  
Is the mind of deep compassion, flowing through the world.  
Flowing through you and flowing through me—  
She is this one mind of deep compassion.

I think this wonderful poem can make anyone who reads it awaken to their buddha nature. The poet wants us to understand what is really important, and his compassionate mind has created a poem that conveys, in simple, straightforward language, the truth of the teachings.

If you think about the meaning of the phrase “beholding living beings with eyes of compassion” in light of this poem, you’ll see that we all have the same deep compassion as the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World flowing within ourselves. Even though each person has his or her own way of living, we are individuals forming a whole—we are all living the one great life-force that is the unity of self and others, and we are receiving this precious, sacred life together. This way of seeing through compassionate eyes calls forth innumerable blessings.

### The Light Shining on the Path

The novelist Wahei Tatematsu (1947–2010) wrote an essay about an experience he had climbing Mount Nantai, a well-known sacred mountain in Tochigi Prefecture.

Tatematsu and his group hadn’t brought flashlights because they weren’t expecting to be on the mountain after dark. However, they were delayed in their descent, and as the sun started to set, it became difficult to walk down the mountain path. Far below his feet, Tatematsu could see Lake Chuzenji and the lights from souvenir shops and inns shining by the lakeshore, but they only made the mountain darkness pitch black by comparison. Just then, he saw a faint light ahead of him. It came from the small flashlight of a woman who had become tired and was crouched down by the side of the path. Tatematsu and his friends approached the woman and picked up her pack. Then they went down the mountain together with the woman, the path at their feet lit by her small, thin light.

Tatematsu wrote that “for the woman, we who walked together with her became her Regarder of Sounds, while she who lit the path for us became our Regarder of Sounds. No matter how bright the lights in the distance were, they were of no help to us. On the contrary, no matter how weak the light in front of you may be, it is an enormous help.” Indeed, it is in the faint light of compassion and consideration for others that the bodhisattva appears. As chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra teaches, the Regarder of Sounds may appear anytime, anyplace, to show us the means of liberation.

Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra, “The Life Span of the Eternal Tathagata,” concludes with lines of verse that are said to be the greatest vow of compassion: “How can I cause living beings to / Embark upon the unsurpassable Way / And quickly accomplish embodiment as buddhas?” The Regarder of Sounds Sutra provides us with encouragement and liberation by telling us that if each and every one of us makes this vow and shows consideration for other people, we will produce many bodhisattvas and make everyone happy.

From *Kosei*, July 2021

# Spiritual Journey

## Inspired by Founder's Dharma Talk

Ms. Kayoko Wekarski  
Rissho Kosei-kai of New York

*This Dharma Journey talk was delivered at the New York Dharma Center on November 15, 2020, during the ceremony for the anniversary of Founder Niwano's birth.*

**E**TERNAL Buddha Shakyamuni, Founder Niwano, President Niwano, please guide me. It's an honor to have this opportunity to share my Dharma Journey on this special occasion: Founder Niwano's birthday. Thank you so much, everyone.

Thanks to my now-deceased aunt, I was able to encounter Rissho Kosei-kai. I first came across Rissho Kosei-kai's monthly magazine, *Kosei*, when I was in junior high. My grandmother brought it home after receiving it from my aunt, who was a member. When I opened the first page, there was a picture of a smiling Founder Niwano (then President) and his Dharma talk.

In 1977, when I was a freshman in college, I walked through the doors of the Okinawa Dharma Center for the first time, accompanied by my aunt. That day, I was so moved by a young woman's Dharma Journey talk that I decided to join Rissho Kosei-kai.

Since then, I've had the opportunity to listen to the teachings of the Founder through video broadcasts of the ceremonies held at the Headquarters on days such as anniversaries. Many people were attracted to him because of his kind smile, gentle and easily understood manner of speaking, and his humble personality, which he expressed by always thinking of others. It is said that his personality was cultivated in his hometown of Sukanuma.

Sukanuma, where the Founder was born and raised, is a mountain village in Niigata Prefecture that is covered by deep snow in winter. As the Founder mentioned many times, it was customary for the people of the village to help each other on a daily basis and revere the gods and buddhas. The Founder

would put his palms together and pay respect to the gods and buddhas at various sacred places whenever he passed them on his way to school. He also had great teachers in Sukanuma: his grandfather, father, mother, and his elementary school principal. They all had a great impact on his life. His grandfather used to say to the young Founder Niwano, "You must become a person who devotes himself to others and society."

When the Founder paid a visit to the Okinawa Dharma Center, I was able to see his great smile in person. I was so overwhelmed that all I could do was just stare at his face, so I don't remember what he talked about.

I was always inspired by the Founder's Dharma talks. After I married my American husband and came to the United States in 1989, I couldn't visit Rissho Kosei-kai's Dharma centers very often because I lived far away. So, I relied on the Founder's monthly Dharma messages as guidelines for my daily life.



*Ms. Wekarski (right) after the enshrinement ceremony for the locally bestowed Focus of Devotion at Ms. Dianne Hall's home in Ft. Myers.*

Even after Founder Niwano entered nirvana, I continued to read his books and his Dharma talks in Rissho Kosei-kai's publications. Among his many Dharma talks, the one that particularly impressed me was titled "Opening Up Everyone's Buddha Nature Is Our Mission." This talk appeared in the booklet *Living the Lotus* volume 1, issue 2, compiled in 2007 by Koichi Nagamoto—the Minister of Rissho Kosei-kai of New York—and his staff. The Dharma talk itself was given in October 1956, so, quite a long time ago, but it was instrumental in helping me change myself. I have read it over and over again.

In the early 1990s, my family was experiencing financial difficulties. We moved to Florida in late 1994, but even after some time, my husband was still unable to find stable work and I was juggling two jobs to support my family. My husband became frustrated and started to drink. Because I was in such a difficult situation, my heart was drawn to a Dharma talk that began with the proverb "joy is the seed of suffering and suffering is the seed of joy."

In the talk, Founder Niwano said, "Only through suffering can we experience joy. What we think is joy becomes suffering; what we think is suffering turns to joy." The Founder then gave a simple explanation of the proverb, using a familiar example as follows.

In the Dharma center, we usually sit together with a large group of people—sitting is easier than standing. But, the Founder explained:

Now suppose you must sit for a very long time and are not allowed to stand up at all. Sitting would not be much fun in that case. It may become very annoying indeed. [...] Conversely, those of you who are standing may find it painful, but as soon as you are able to sit, you will experience joy and comfort. So, we learned that when a joyful situation is extended and lasts too long, it can become a cause of sorrow. On the other hand, even hardship can become a cause of joy.

The Founder continued his talk, and I understood the rest of his words in the following way. The Buddha said this *saha* world is full of suffering. But he expounded 84,000 sutras to teach us that we can transform suffering into joy. However, the practice of eliminating suffering is very difficult. Because we practice with the Sangha to remove the grime of delusion from our hearts, we will be able to deal with life's difficulties and turn them into joy. If we learn the Dharma and have faith in it, our future will be filled with hope and happiness. Even if we don't fully comprehend all the principles of the Lotus Sutra, we should recite it every morning, connect other people with the Dharma, live every day with gratitude, and never for a moment forget the Buddha's teachings. If you do these things, you are upholding the Dharma.

After reading this Dharma talk, my perspective changed and I was able to accept with gratitude what I used to think of as painful. Until that moment, I'd been frustrated that my husband couldn't find a job. However, the Founder's words enabled me to see this problem as an opportunity for self-reflection.

I began to see the cause of my own suffering. Until that moment, I had a narrow view about things and judged people based on their professions. I ranked occupations and looked down on jobs that didn't require high skills or qualifications. However, after I became able to reflect on my own heart, I began to respect all people who worked hard at their jobs, including those who worked at construction sites and supermarkets. Every working person was amazing to me. I even came to appreciate the room attendants and dishwashers at the hotel where I was employed.

Another change was that I am now able to face painful and unpleasant things. In the past, I was distressed because I couldn't accept things not going my way. At such times, the Founder's Dharma talks gave me strength. He said:

# Spiritual Journey

Since we are flesh-and-blood beings, we become sick, age, and eventually we all have to die. However, if we understand the fundamental concern of the Buddha's teachings, we will not suffer in any way. As [the Lotus Sutra] says that the Buddha's teachings free us from birth, aging, illness, and death, and enable us to ultimately arrive at nirvana, although we struggle so much with the four sufferings at the beginning, in the end we can accomplish awakening through practice.

Whenever I go through a tough time, I read the Founder's Dharma talks and tell myself, "Even though I'm having a hard time right now, I will do my best with gratitude and turn it into a learning experience." This is the way I regain my vitality.

After the new coronavirus pandemic began, my husband quit drinking cold turkey. I had been troubled by his drinking for a long time; the Sangha at the Dharma center had patiently listened to me and given me positive support over many years. My husband's doctor told him that his kidney function had dropped to 58 percent, and that he also had diabetes. After he realized that he was at high risk for health problems from the new coronavirus, he completely quit drinking. He also told me, "Now that I know good health isn't something to be taken for granted, I have a broader view of life in general than before." Lately, we've been taking walks and going shopping together as well as enjoying casual conversation. I feel very grateful that we can share these small pleasures together.

In the Founder's Dharma message in the November 2020 issue of *Yakushin*, a monthly magazine published by Kosei Publishing Company, you can find the following words: "Change Yourself." As Founder Niwano explains, "There is a way to transform everything that happens to you and turn it all into good encounters. Put simply, instead of trying to change the world around you, you must first change

yourself. Then, before you know it, your surroundings will change."

It's not easy to change oneself—my husband and I will surely encounter many difficulties in the future. However, we will overcome them by always reflecting on ourselves. I will keep the Buddha's teaching and the Founder's words firmly in my heart and strive for bodhisattva practice together with my family and everyone in the Sangha. Thank you for listening.



*Ms. Wekarski with her family at their home in Orlando.*

# The Threefold Lotus Sutra: A Summary and Key Points for Each Chapter

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano



## The Sutra of the Method for Contemplating the Bodhisattva Universal Sage

As indicated by its title, this sutra, which appears after the closing chapter of the Lotus Sutra, makes the Bodhisattva Universal Sage its central figure—but because of its special emphasis on the practical methods of acknowledgment and remorse, it is sometimes referred to as the Sutra of Acknowledgment and Remorse.

### Contemplating the Bodhisattva Universal Sage

Contemplating the Bodhisattva Universal Sage is the practical way to perceive his virtue, thereby attuning our mind to his spirit and fixing our mind on the Buddha Way so our spiritual discipline eventually becomes more like his.

The sutra repeatedly explains how the physical form of the Bodhisattva Universal Sage is to be seen, symbolizing the attunement of the mind to the spirit of the bodhisattva. An inability to reach this state signals one's need to perform acknowledgment and remorse and reflect upon the incompleteness of the practice.

Even practitioners who can see the body of the Bodhisattva Universal Sage must not stop their practice and effort, however, for it's only through their ability to see the body of the Buddha—aligning their minds with the Buddha's—that their practice may become perfect.

### The Ultimate Reality of All Things

This sutra explains that the culmination of acknowledgment and remorse means pondering the foremost teaching of emptiness, which is the ultimate reality of all things. Single-minded contemplation together with a full understanding and acceptance of this teaching, grounded in the performance of acknowledgment and remorse for each of the six sense faculties, bring the practitioner to a state of oneness with the mind of the Buddha. At this stage, all wrongs, just like frost and dew, are melted away by the sun of wisdom.

### The Practical Application of Acknowledgment and Remorse

To think in such philosophical terms is difficult for lay practitioners, however, so at the end of this sutra, the Buddha shares a more down-to-earth way of performing acknowledgment and remorse.

For the first method, the Buddha explains that ordinary people should always take refuge in the Three Treasures: the Buddha, the Buddha's teaching, and the religious community of people who have faith in the Buddha Dharma (the Sangha). They should also never do anything that obstructs the practice of those who follow



the monastic order. Furthermore, they should concentrate their minds by practicing the six methods of focus: focusing upon and never forgetting the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, the precepts, giving, and heaven. They should also remain ever conscious of the foremost teaching of emptiness—the ultimate reality of all things.

The second method of acknowledgment and remorse is to have filial devotion—to be dutiful to one’s parents—and to respect one’s teachers and elders.

The third method of acknowledgment and remorse is for them to rule their lands with the true Dharma and not lead their people astray with erroneous views. (And if they don’t rule over lands, they should guide people in the right way within their organizations or companies.)

The fourth method of acknowledgment and remorse is to issue a decree within their realm to practice nonkilling to the greatest extent possible on the six days of abstention, and to have this decree followed. (In ancient India, each month had six days of abstention, which were special days of religious ascetic diligence. On these days, people were prohibited from taking life.)

The fifth method of acknowledgment and remorse is to deeply believe in cause and effect, to have faith in the Way of one ultimate reality, and to know that the Buddha never perishes.







## The Fifth Method as a Summary of Buddhist Teachings

The above-mentioned five methods of acknowledgment and remorse are important practices—especially the fifth method: “to deeply believe in cause and effect, to have faith in the Way of one ultimate reality, and to know that the Buddha never perishes.” This is a fitting summary of Buddhist teachings.

Cause and effect is also called the Dharma of dependent origination, or the principle of causation. This truth forms the core of basic Buddhist teachings.

The Way of one ultimate reality means the one way to become a buddha, or the bodhisattva way. This means that while there may seem to be many surface differences in the teachings of the Buddha, the one ultimate reality—the one truth—binds everyone on the Way to buddhahood.

And finally, to know that the Buddha never perishes is to know the truth that the Eternal Original Buddha has infinite life, and that we are given the gift of life and sustained by the Eternal Original Buddha.

If this threefold faith stands unshakably in our minds and hearts, every one of us can attain a state of mind that is completely free—and this is true liberation. There could hardly be a more fitting conclusion to the Threefold Lotus Sutra than these golden words.

This is an English translation of text that originally appeared in Japanese in *Hokke sanbu kyo: Kaku hon no aramashi to yoten*, by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai (Kosei Publishing, 1991 [revised edition, 2016]), pp. 225–29.





## Director's Column

### Cherishing Each Encounter Is Living the Lotus Sutra

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa

Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

**P**RESIDENT Nichiko Niwano discusses the Regarder of Sounds Sutra in his message for this month, showing how he places special importance on “beholding living beings with eyes of compassion.” As I read his message, I felt as if the President was speaking directly to my heart, saying, “We should be aware that we all possess eyes of compassion that call forth innumerable blessings. Keeping this in mind, let us lead our lives with minds of compassion and consideration for others.”

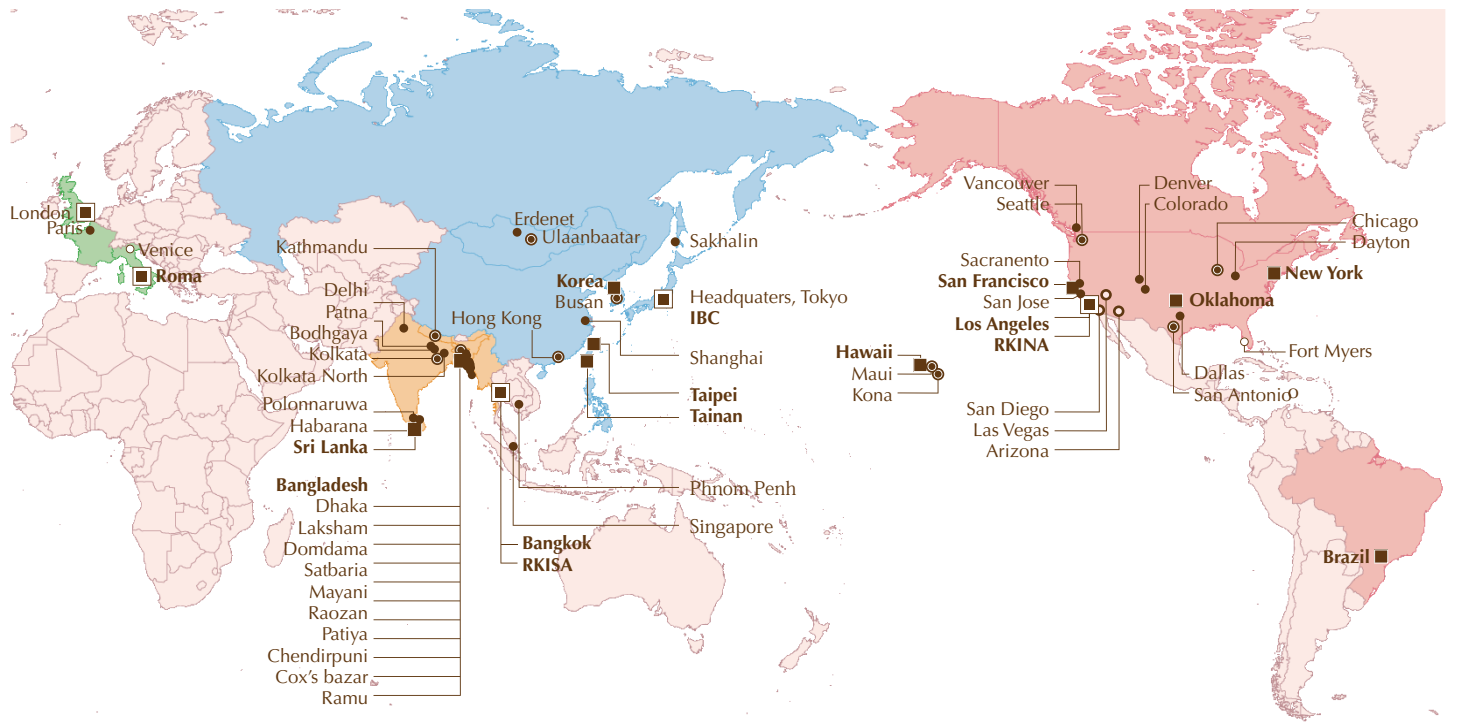
This reminds me of Founder Nikkyo Niwano, who kindly taught us that cherishing each encounter is living the Lotus Sutra. I also feel that, through their words and actions, President Niwano and President-designate Kosho Niwano encourage us to improve the quality of our every encounter and interaction with others.

Several times a year, President Niwano holds online roundtable discussions with ministers in Japan. For the ministers whose Dharma centers mark anniversaries, I recently learned that the President asks if they are grateful for being able to celebrate these events—even though, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, no one is able to celebrate in the way they hope to. I think the President’s question is a reminder for the ministers of the importance of drawing close with all their hearts to the sorrows and regrets of their members who have looked forward to the anniversary celebrations. I also accept the President’s question as his expression of warm trust in the eyes of compassion that we all possess.

With appreciation for the opportunity to learn about the President’s question, I will continue my practice with all my heart to become a person who can look at others with eyes of compassion and draw close to them in my everyday life—at any time, place, and with any person.



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**Rissho Kosei-kai Satbaria**

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**Rissho Kosei-kai Chendhirpuni**

Village: Chendhirpuni, P.O.: Adhunogar, P.S.: Lohagara, Chittagong,  
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**Rissho Kosei-kai Raozan**

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