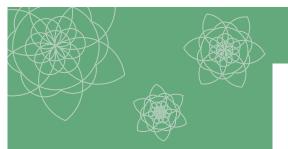
Living the Lotus

Buddhism in Everyday Li



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.

Living the Lotus Vol. 200 (May 2022)

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Founder's Reflections

OL. 200

A Simple "Thank You"

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano

I F you can respond "Yes!" and say "thank you" with ease, anytime, anywhere, then I think you make the grade as a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra.

If you always remember to smile and respond clearly with a cheerful voice, it completely transforms your mind. That mindset acts like a rudder, steering people in the direction of more and more happiness.

The Lotus Sutra shows us which among the many things that happen in the world are the most important, why such things happen, and how to fundamentally look at those events. It also teaches us how to accept those things, how to relate to others, and how to live an authentically human life.

When you have come to feel overwhelming gratitude for the wondrous path of practice you have been taught, and you now enjoy every day, I think it's safe to say you've become a buddha.

A person once told me, "Happiness is being able to say 'thank you." A heart that can feel gratitude is life's greatest treasure.

Kaiso zuikan 10 (Kosei Publishing, 1997), pp. 194-5

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

Forbearance Is Not "Putting Up With Things" – Forbearance, Part 1

Rev. Nichiko Niwano President of Rissho Kosei-kai



Our Minds Possess the Power of Forbearance

When something difficult or disagreeable happens, we may want to look away or run away from it, but we cannot always avoid the people and the hardships we encounter.

I succeeded to the presidency of Rissho Kosei-kai in 1991. From the following year, I spent ten years "visiting relatives" to form a personal connection with members all over Japan. I also traveled to overseas Dharma centers to meet my Kosei-kai family members there. At one point, I was left alone on the large stage of a large venue to speak before some 10,000 people. As someone who has an aversion to making public speeches, this was very difficult for me and I felt like running away. Back then, there were more than a few moments like that.

However, as I grow older and look back on things, I can see that the experiences that felt difficult at the time have made me who I am now. This is not a change from aversion to skillfulness, but rather the realization that as the years have passed, I have changed how I accept what I thought of, in my younger days, as a series of trials that I had to put up with and endure.

When we change our point of view, our minds possess the power to endure and accept even those things that are so difficult and disagreeable that they make us feel angry—and even employ them as a support to live.

"This sutra . . . can make one who is angry aspire to forbearance," is written in the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings. This passage teaches us that one merit of people who have learned the Buddha's teachings is that they have a mind of tolerance that can endure when feeling emotions such as intense anger or hate. What I find important in this passage is the phrase "makes one aspire." This teaching is not forcing us to suppress our feelings of anger or put up with things. Rather, it shows us that our own buddha nature gives rise to spontaneous feelings of perseverance. I therefore feel liberated by the phrase, "makes one aspire." By no means is forbearance teaching us to put up with things.

As in the saying, "delusions and awakening are two sides of the same coin," your mind that wants to swear at people and resents a difficult situation does, on the other hand, summon forth your own buddha nature. At such times, we possess the power of forbearance to positively accept and deal with even the most difficult situation because the Buddha has given us his stamp of approval—and that is something awe-inspiring, for which we should be grateful.

Acknowledgment Leads to Forbearance

Someone wrote that forbearance "depends on the premise of accepting and acknowledging," and that certainly is true. Whether we are trying to overcome our anger toward and hatred for people or our feelings of aversion to and dislike of our surroundings and circumstances, we must first accept and acknowledge the person or event in front of us, which will lead to the spontaneous practice of forbearance in our daily lives.

The Lotus Sutra tells us that the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect made a sign of respect to everyone, saying, "I could never find you unworthy of respect. All of you will become buddhas" and although those people hurled abuse at him, the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect accepted and endured it all. Underlying the attitude of endurance seen in this passage is the mind of revering other people's buddha nature and accepting their individuality, which I think is an important point of the Lotus Sutra.

Accept and acknowledge your situation. That puts you at ease. When we think we are enduring something, it becomes difficult, but if we accept the situation for what it is, our feelings of deficiency, dissatisfaction, anger, and hatred subside, and our thoughts of it being difficult and disagreeable diminish. Prince Shotoku (574–622) wrote, in the Seventeen-Article Constitution, "Do not become angry because others think differently than you do. You and others are all ordinary persons and you both possess wisdom and foolishness." Indeed, when both parties acknowledge that they have wisdom as well as foolishness, their anger should naturally subside.

While in some cases it may happen right away, as I mentioned earlier, the merit of forbearance may only be realized with the passage of time and the accumulation of many experiences. And as long as forbearance is a diligent practice of the bodhisattva, I think we must not forget that forbearance, as a function of compassion, has the aspect of benefitting others.

From Kosei, May 2022

Spiritual Journey

Moving Forward with My Learnings from Gakurin in Mind

Ms. Oshadhi Lakshika Liyanage Rissho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka

This Dharma Journey talk was presented at Rissho Kosei-kai's Ome Retreat Center in Tokyo on February 21, 2022, during Sotsurin Seppo-e, a ceremony in which graduating Gakurin Seminary overseas students present their own Dharma Journeys.

I N 2012 I participated in a youth seminar hosted by the Sri Lanka Dharma Center, which became a catalyst for me to join Rissho Kosei-kai. As I saw other members offer a sincere sutra recitation and interact with people with a warmhearted mind, I felt somehow that Rissho Kosei-kai was different from other religious groups. Also, I clearly remember the time when I was so impressed by the Six Vows made by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, in his adolescence. I especially thought I would like to become a person like the Founder when I heard the third and fifth vows: "To undertake tasks that others find disagreeable," and "To work steadily and hard no matter whether others are observing me."

After joining Rissho Kosei-kai, I participated in various religious activities in Sri Lanka, during which I met youth leaders who had graduated from the Gakurin overseas students' course and were engaged in local dissemination activities. I asked them where they had learned the Buddha's teachings, and they taught me about Gakurin Seminary. I thought it would be challenging for me to enter the seminary, but as I was so touched by the Buddha's teachings while attending many events such as an international youth seminar, the feeling welled up in my mind that I would like to share the teachings with many others. After that, Rev. Yoshiaki Yamamoto, the former minister of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center, gave me a chance to take an exam for Gakurin, but unfortunately, I failed it. Feeling very mortified, I kept studying for the next chance. One year later, Rev. Hironobu Suzuki, the current minister of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center, gave me another chance, and I was able to pass the exam to enter the seminary.

On the day of my departure for Japan, I was worried if the plane would take off, as the new coronavirus had just begun spreading throughout the world. Thanks to the prayers of my family and other members of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center, however, the airplane was able to safely take off. At that moment, I truly felt that I was protected by the Buddha. On the plane, I was filled with various emotions and tears, but just as the Founder made his vows on the way to Tokyo from his hometown, I arrived in Japan with a strong determination that I would overcome whatever would happen to me.

There have been three essential learnings in my life at Gakurin. The first one is learning from my classmates. I was thankful that I could safely arrive in Japan, but due to the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the classes at the Japanese language school were online, and I had to spend most of the day with my classmates, which made me feel very stressed at first.



Ms. Liyanage delivers her Dharma Journey talk during the ceremony.

Spiritual Journey

When I had to listen to my classmates for long hours or when our conversations didn't go well, I struggled with the difficulty of building a good relationship with them.

Around that time, we had an opportunity to take a lecture from Rev. Yasutaka Watanabe, a former chair of board of trustees of Rissho Kosei-kai. During the lecture, I mentioned my struggle to Rev. Watanabe, and he advised me to take a few minutes to reflect on myself after sutra recitation practice each day.

Since then, I started looking into how my mind was moving after this sutra recitation. Then, I felt that I gradually became able to reflect on my state of mind, which changed constantly while spending time with my classmates: I became happy, sad, or lonely. Also, I wished to get along with my classmates, but at the same time, I sometimes became afraid of relationships with them or harbored anger. Experiencing these various feelings, the mind of gratitude was wondrously welling up inside me, and I began to see the good in them.

Mr. Bhatthacharya Swarnadeep, one of my classmates from Kolkata, India, always cares about me and honestly tells me his feelings. At first, I wanted to run away from his straightforwardness, but I learned from him that running away from someone makes me more distant and so I need to use words to express my feelings.

Mr. Munguntsetseg Amarbayasgal, the other classmate from Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, always intervened to help us get along when Bhattacharya and I argued. I was encouraged and supported by his kindness many times.

My life at Gakurin amid the pandemic was really tough, but thanks to all the suffering and struggling I have been through, I trust that we were able to become a true sangha. I would like to express my gratitude to my classmates. Thank you very much.

The second essential learning came through a Living the Lotus May 2022

Dharma dissemination training at the Ome Retreat Center. During the training, Ms. Hiroyo Tanaka, a staff member of Gakurin Seminary Daiju Group, served as my mentor. She taught me the importance of cleaning places that people usually do not care about or pay attention to.

Hearing her advice, I started practicing cleaning the kitchen sink in my dorm before lights out. However, no matter how clean I made it, it would soon become dirty, so I got fed up with it once and stopped the practice. At that time, I was a little angry at the dorm mates who left the sink dirty after using it. However, by relearning the view of causes and conditions, I learned the importance of changing my mind instead of changing others, with a resolution that I would practice it no matter what. I also felt that by purifying my surroundings, more than anything else, I could beautify and enrich my own heart. As President Nichiko Niwano taught us the spirit of "This place is indeed the place of the Way," I would like to continue my diligent practice wherever I am after returning to Sri Lanka.

The third is that I learned kindness from all the people who supported me. When I entered the seminary with anxious feelings, the staff warmly welcomed me, and when I was sick, they took good care of me. They helped me practice the Japanese language and sutra recitation. Also, when I was injured, Rev. Yoshie Otomo, deputy director of Gakurin Seminary Daiju Group, treated me gently like a mother. Ms. Fukuda and other teachers at the Japanese language school taught me Japanese well, and the staff members at Gakurin always listened to me attentively as if they had kindly embraced me. Experiencing their kindness, I felt that my relationship with my father, which had been troubled for a long time, was gradually changing.

Growing up with a father who hit me as a child, I was afraid to express my honest feelings to him.

Spiritual Journey

However, thanks to the many experiences and learnings I have gained during my time at Gakurin, I am now able to listen to my father's feelings first, without fear. I would also like to learn the kindness that everyone has taught me and make an effort to see the buddha nature in each member of my family.

Last December, I had an interview with Rev. Kyoichi Sugino, president of Gakurin Seminary, about my post-graduation plans, and he told me about the importance of continuing my studies even after returning to Sri Lanka or getting married in the future. After that interview, I set two goals.

The first is to continue improving my language

skills. I would like to learn Tamil and English because I hope to share the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai with people of other religions, such as Hindus and Christians. Second, I would like to tell the people of Sri Lanka that all people possess buddha nature. Sri Lankans are unaware that each person is endowed with buddha nature. Through my practice, I would like to tell the people of Sri Lanka that everyone has the same mind as the Buddha.

I will strive to keep these two goals in mind and to devote myself to diligent practice with a smile, even after I return to Sri Lanka. Thank you all for your kind attention.



Ms. Liyanage after sutra copying practice during Dharma dissemination training.

An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

The Teachings of the President

President Nichiko Niwano promotes the Three Practices, which anyone can do anytime and anywhere:

- 1. We exchange morning greetings.
- 2. We respond clearly and positively when we are spoken to.
- 3. We push in the chair when we get up from the table and line up our shoes neatly after taking them off.

Now, let's practice them at home and school from today. It will surely make you feel refreshed.

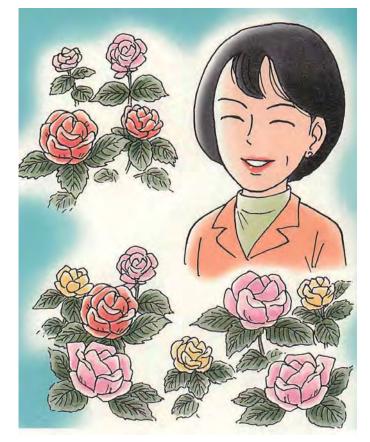


Did You Know?

The "Three Practices" derives from the three-point discipline principles that Mr. Nobuzo Mori, a philosopher and an educator, advocated. He is said to have exerted a great influence over Japan's postwar education.



An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics



President-designate Kosho Niwano of Rissho Kosei-kai

Kosho Niwano was born in 1968 in Suginami Ward, Tokyo as the eldest daughter of the President. After graduating from university, she entered Gakurin Seminary, which was established by the Founder in 1964 to develop human resources that work for the benefit of others. There, she learned religious studies, including Buddhism. She also studies the doctrines of Rissho Kosei-kai and the roles it should undertake as a Buddhist organization. As the President-designate she has devoted herself to promoting the organization's regular activities, including leading sutra readings during ceremonies at the Great Sacred Hall.

At home, she is a loving wife and a mother to four children. Her overflowing smile and friendly personality are loved by members.



> Did You Know?

Rev. Kosho Niwano married Mr. Munehiro Yamada in 1995. Some 9,000 members from the Dharma centers all over Japan assembled in the Great Sacred Hall in celebration for their wedding ceremony.

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Director's Column



The Mind of Forbearance

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

M AY has arrived. Fresh green leaves are shining brightly everywhere. The President's Message for this month focuses on "forbearance," one of the Six Paramitas, which is a suitable topic of learning as we have continued to persevere with the COVID-19 catastrophe for a long time.

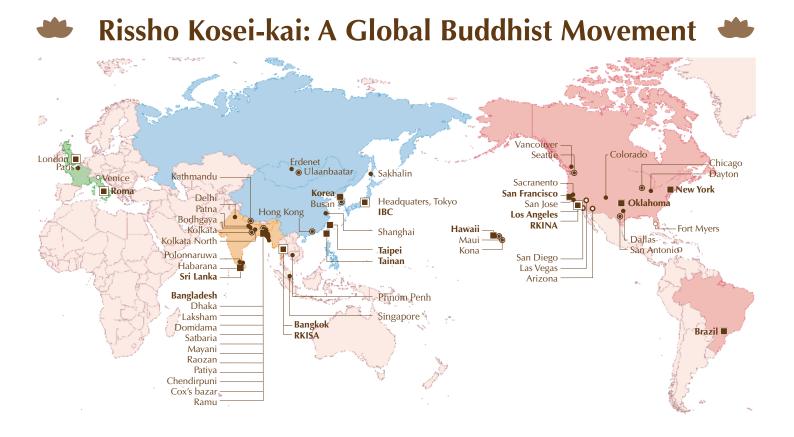
The title of the Message, "Forbearance Is Not 'Putting Up With Things'" is pregnant with meaning and I sense it reflects President Niwano's deep intention. So I searched for the meaning of "forbearance" once again in Founder Nikkyo Niwano's modern commentary on the Threefold Lotus Sutra (*Shinshaku hokke sambukyo*). It says that forbearance means "maintaining a spirit of magnanimity in the face of the mental and physical harm inflicted on us and preserving equanimity, not becoming intoxicated with ourselves no matter how highly we are revered or how well we are treated by others."

In his Message, President Niwano introduces his own experience that, with the passage of time, he has come to possess the mind of forbearance to positively accept and deal with things, which he originally thought of as a series of trials soon after he succeeded the presidency. As the study and practice of the Dharma proceeds, one will come to possess a mind that accepts the suffering one experiences in real life, while acknowledging the suffering will bring about peace of mind. Such is the merit of the Dharma that all of us, not only President Niwano, wish to savor.

In a world filled with many kinds of suffering, we could say that today might be the right time to acquire the wisdom of forbearance.



We welcome comments on our newsletter *Living the Lotus*: living.the.lotus.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp. Living the Lotus May 2022



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