



Buddhism for Today:
Cultivating the fields of
the heart and mind

HIGHLIGHTS

911 Memorial

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Sangha In Motion

Bimonthly eNewsletter for RK Members in the US

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 5

OCTOBER 2014

RK-NY Hosts 911 Remembrance

The shock of the 9-11 tragedy will always hold a poignant place in the hearts of people throughout the world. Every year, at the New York Center, we held a Memorial Service striking the gong at 8:45am, the time when the first plane struck the World Trade Center.

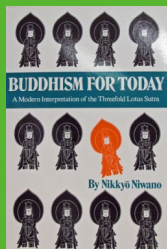
Because the 9-11 tragedy occurred here in New York City, Rev. Fujita shared her belief that the service at our Center should be a more significant event with American members playing central roles, that this should be one of our major vehicles to promote world peace.

We decided to hold a special event annually from this year forward. Each event would honor the victims with deep reverence, simplicity and elegance, while sharing the Founder and President's perspective on world peace. The objective would always be to take us one more step in our quest for a harmonious world.

September 11th fell on a Thursday this year. We wished to continue to start at 8:45 am, but people who live and work in our neighborhood were likely to be in a rush at that time, either on their way to work or school. To accommodate those people, we stated on our flyers that they can come in just to offer flowers in front of the altar. We wanted to provide a venue for the people in our neighborhood to remember the victims with reverence and to help them mindfully start such a significant day.

With Rev. Fujita leading the way, the altar room was transformed into a luminous sanctuary. Various suggestions were made and, through trial and error, the stage was set.

In deep reverence for the victims and viewing this event as a step in raising awareness for a harmonious world, we opened the door at



Ethics: To remove the mind of arrogance and to admonish and discipline oneself. BFT, p. 37



Guidance from President Niwano

Ethics. Keeping the Precepts. "Makes an arrogant one raise the mind of keeping the precepts." To remove the mind of arrogance and to admonish and discipline oneself (37).

"The practice of keeping the precepts is the second of the Six Perfections. This teaches us that we cannot truly save others unless we remove our own illusions through the precepts given by the Buddha, and that we should perfect our-

selves by living an upright life. However, we must not think that we cannot guide others just because we are not perfect ourselves. We cannot improve ourselves if we shut ourselves off from others in our efforts to live correctly. A major point of keeping the precepts is to render service to others. The more we do for others, the more we can elevate ourselves, and the more we can elevate ourselves, the more we can render service to others. Each reinforces the other."

Buddhism for Today (36)

Commentary

Can we imagine a world without ethics? What would it be like? Kind of messy and scary, I think. If everyone went their own way, doing as they felt from moment to moment, day to day, with no concern for others, how could we possibly survive? Ethics gives us healthy boundaries as well as a guide for behavior. The basic Buddhist precepts are not to kill, steal, commit adultery, lie, or drink intoxicants. These precepts are found in most religions and societies. It is our basic code of conduct. Whether we add more precepts to this list or not, if we follow these basic five precepts we can be assured of living a proper life.

Chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra, "Skillful Means," mentions the Six Paramitas, and describes this second Paramita with the curious word "arrogance." One who does not follow or try to follow the basic precepts is "arrogant." Basically this arrogant one has no concern for others and thinks he knows best how to behave. And when we do not try to follow the precepts, when we

by Mary Tracy Sigman

think we know better and act unwisely, we are arrogant. We are also undisciplined. We are out of control. We are letting our desires and delusions control us.

Founder Niwano in his great wisdom further explains that all of our good intentions to liberate others and be compassionate are for naught if we ourselves do not lead proper lives. This is hard work, not just the mere following of rules, but a deeper cleansing of the mind and heart. By following the precepts we rid our hearts and minds of that arrogance and we begin to see reality clearly. We are not acting under the cloud of our senses and desires. Following the precepts makes us better people. And as Founder tells us, with the basic precepts and with time, this will feel natural, normal. We could not consider doing something we used to do. We have improved, and our interaction with others has improved. We are acting in harmony with others, and that makes the world a better place.

RKINA

by Rev. Nick Ozuna

From September 12-14, the second session of the Advanced Lotus Sutra Seminar was held in Oklahoma City. Nine attendees from San Antonio, Oklahoma, Tampa Bay, and Orange County participated. It was instructed by Rev. Kris Ladusau and Rev. Nick Ozuna, and assisted by Kathy Spengler from RKOK. RKI Staff Shizuyo Miura was also in attendance. During the intensive weekend, the participants studied 8 chapters of the Lotus Sutra and offered their interpretations and experiences based on these chapters. Two more sessions will be held for these participants in 2015.



RKINA and LA

RKLA's 55th Anniversary

RKLA
55th
Anniversary
Celebration!

Happy
Birthday!

On September 7, 2014 nearly 125 members attended the 55th Anniversary of the founding of Rissho Kosei-kai of Los Angeles. A special video presentation was held observing the history of RKLA. Also, Rev. Nakamura, former minister of RKLA was in attendance, and he offered a special mural from his mother (the 1st minister of RKLA) as a gift to the RKLA Buddhist Center



RKINA Interfaith Hunger Walk

On Sunday Oct. 19th, RKLA youth members joined various other religious organizations in the Interfaith Crop Walk, a function held nationally to help raise money to alleviate hunger in various parts of the world. The 4K walk built bonds within the membership while having a fun time for a good cause. Members also enjoyed a picnic in the park.





“Hatred can never cease by hatred. The cycle of vengeance is brought to an end by non-vengeance.”

New York by Judy Yoshitsu

911 Memorial

The event started with striking the gong at 8:45 am, followed by a moment of silence. A continuous stream of instrumental music for “Thousand Winds” lightly in the background began. President Niwano’s guidance after the 9-11 attack was read. We were reminded of Shakyamuni Buddha’s teaching: “Hatred can never cease by hatred. The cycle of vengeance is brought to an end by non-vengeance.” The Threefold Lotus Sutra was recited softly from that moment until about 12:15pm in front of the altar, with two groups of three leaders alternating without interruption. This was in keeping with the Founder and the President’s teaching that chanting the sutra is meditation.

As we stood outside and invited people into the Center, we immediately found that passing out the flyers was not as effective as actually providing the white carnations on the sidewalk. Most people were rushing and did not want to be bothered. Of those who did accept the flower, many reluctantly entered. We even watched the dogs for those who were walking their dogs. (All the dogs were so well-behaved; it was as though they knew their owners were doing something special!)

What was amazing was that every person, without exception, came out with a softer expression on their face. Most were smiling. Some were beaming. Many thanked us. The transformation was truly remarkable.

All in all, we had about 110 people enter the Center and offer flowers that day. Quite a few sat on the chairs for a while, taking in the atmosphere, meditated and looked around in awe. We hoped by warming their hearts, they would in turn pass that light to their families, friends, roommates, co-workers, fellow students and teachers – and all other people they encounter throughout the day.

It was our first time, so we had no idea how this event would turn out. It was truly a collective group effort. We were so grateful that it was such a success.

We look forward to our future events on September 11th. For every member of our Sangha and for people in our community, these events will give us the opportunity to reflect on how we view what happened on that day in 2001, deepen our understanding on why it happened, and to cultivate our hearts and minds toward a harmonious world, with hopes to prevent such tragedy from happening again.



Thursday September 11, 2014

Join us to offer flowers

**In Memory
of
the Victims of 9 • 11**

Doors Open 8:30am

Offering of flowers throughout the morning. Flowers will be provided

Ringing of the Gong...

First gong will sound at **8:45am** followed by a minute of silence.

Special Candlelight Morning Service

Continuous Sutra Recitation at the Altar throughout the morning

**Rissho Kosei-kai
Buddhist Center of New York**

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212-867-5677

rkny39@gmail.com
www.rk-ny.org

You are welcome to stay and experience the recitation or just stop by to pay your respects by offering a flower on your way to work or school

New York

by Judy Yoshitsu



The room was dark, lit only by the lights in and around the altar and flickering little candles all over the room.

The altar was absolutely dazzling...the Eternal Buddha was truly magnificent !!!

In this picture, the Eternal Buddha, the Tathagata Abundant Treasure, the whole altar, glowed brilliantly as the man stood entranced by the sight.



This picture shows someone actually placing the white carnation flower offering on the table. It also gives another angle of the room showing how some of the little candles were placed.



Delicious dishes for the victims prepared by Rev. Fujita and the members.

Flower arrangement by Yoshi Imura

Parents brought their children. Here is a mother with her son choosing a flower to offer to the Buddha. Notice the brilliant and large glow of the light surrounding the Tathagata Abundant Treasure



Picture of the offering table after the service.



Oklahoma City

by Rev. Kris Ladusau

Everyone joined together to clean and beautify the Oklahoma Dharma Center. We worked diligently both inside and outside. We discussed the importance of caring for the Dharma Center and that it is another form of donation – using our time and body to maintain our place of practice. It is always a fun time together as a sangha. You can feel the joy of the Dharma in the energy that everyone contributes. While we are cleaning the facility, we are cleaning our minds and hearts at the same time.

“While we are cleaning the facility, we are cleaning our minds and hearts at the same time.”



Suminagashi Seminar by Rev. Kris Ladusau

This year at the Oklahoma Dharma Center, we had a Suminagashi seminar. It is an art form that "floats" ink on top of water. You can use different colors of ink and also make very original designs. When you are ready, you lay a sheet of paper on top of the water and leave it for a minute. Then you pick it up and let it dry. The design will now be on the paper. You can make greeting cards, bookmarks or simply pieces of art to give as gifts. This was a very fun gathering.





Oklahoma City

by Rev. Kris Ladusau

This year, Oklahoma members attended a weekend retreat at the Osage Forest of Peace near Tulsa, Oklahoma. We chanted, meditated, had Dharma Talks and helped clean the facility – in addition to eating wonderful vegetarian food prepared by the staff at Osage.

The theme for this retreat was “Looking at our Preferences/Attachments.” Rev. Kris Ladusau requested that for the Friday meal, each person prepare a plate of food for someone else – which would mean that the food that you ate would have been chosen by another. It was interesting to hear the comments from everyone as to how that felt for them. Everyone enjoyed a great retreat blessed by beautiful weather that weekend.

Retreat
Theme
Looking at
Our
Preferences/
Attachments

Helen



Meditation Room



Stan

Osage Forest Retreat



Steve and Roger



Chris



The Group



New
Member in
Ft. Myers

Ft. Myers Activities

by Mary Sigman

Our little sangha here in Fort Myers, Florida has continued its work with making each member feel important and necessary. We have kept in touch with all our members, especially the ones that are still up north. We have had some practice performing the Rissho Kosei-kai altar ritual, and several members are now taking turns either leading or assisting at the altar. These may seem like baby steps, but that is the way progress is made. Our Fall Ohigan ceremony went very well, with 13 members having ancestor names recited. As we are part of NY Church, these recitations were also performed in New York on Sept. 21st. This mutual recitation makes us feel connected with all of Rissho Kosei-kai.

Our newest and oldest member, John Nelson, now has his picture to share with you. He has not been able to visit the Center for the past month and a half due to the warm weather, but he will be returning soon now that cooler days arrive.



Family Matters—The God in the Banyan Tree

Buddhist Tales for Young & Old
Prince Goodspeaker www.buddhanet.net



In the past, and even in some places today, people have had superstitions. One such is that a large or unusual tree is inhabited by a tree god, or some kind of spirit. People think that they can make a promise to this tree god, so he will help them in some way.

When they think the god has helped them, then they must keep their promise.

Once upon a time, in the city of Kasi in northern India, a man came upon a large banyan tree. He immediately thought there must be a god living there. So he made a promise to this tree god that he would perform an animal sacrifice, in return for a wish being granted.

It just so happened that his wish was fulfilled, but whether by a god or a demon or by some other means—no one knows. The man was sure the tree god had answered his prayer, so he wanted to keep his promise.

Since it was a big wish, it called for a big sacrifice. He brought many goats, mules, chickens and sheep. He collected firewood and prepared to burn the helpless animals as a sacrifice.

The spirit living in the banyan tree appeared and said, “Oh friend, you made a promise. You are now bound by that

promise. You think you must keep the promise in order to be released from the bondage to it. But if you commit such terrible unwholesome acts, even though promised, the unpleasant results will put you in much greater bondage. For you will be forced to suffer those results in this life, and even by rebirth in hell worlds! The way to release yourself into future deliverance is to give up unwholesome actions no matter what!”

“And further since you think I’m a true god, what makes you think I eat meat? Haven’t you heard that we gods eat better things, like ambrosia or stardust or sunbeams? I have no need of meat or any other food offerings.” Then he disappeared.

The foolish man understood the mistake he had made. Instead of doing unwholesome deeds that would force unhappy results on him in the future, he began to do only wholesome deeds that would benefit himself and others.

THE MORAL IS: Keeping a bad promise is worse than making it.





*Excerpt from
“How Your
Attitude
Brings You
Peace or
Chaos:
Critical
Actions to
Change Your
Life”*

Getting Even

“Don’t get mad, get even.” This concept has been around for centuries. Shakespeare used the theme in many of his tragedies. Unfortunately, this theme has also caused numerous wars and resulted in millions and millions of deaths of people whose lives were shortened by a revengeful act.

Revenge is the name of a TV show that is currently playing. The entire focus of the show is to see how much pain can be caused to the perpetrators of previous vile acts. While this may be a common modis operandi in virtually every culture of the world, indeed all of humanity – that does not make it a healthy response to our problems.

Forgiveness is a much more powerful response than revenge. It is harder to do initially but in the long run, the amount of energy spent, the time spent focusing on our previous pain, anger and hate that eats us, is far more consuming with revenge than it is with forgiveness.

True forgiveness stops the compulsive mentation that keeps the pain alive. It will not take away the memory, but it will allow the healing process to begin. Revenge keeps the wound open and seeping. Even in its completion, revenge does not heal. It only sets up another sorrowful mindset since a

basically “good” person now feels “bad” for the action committed, even though the act was justified in their mind.

Forgiveness is freedom for the one who offers it. Forgiveness is not the same as absolution – if one commits an illegal/immoral act, they should be punished in a court of law. But the “victim” of the act does not need to keep themselves in bondage by reliving the action through their hate, over and over, and over. Forgiveness is not for the benefit of the perpetrator but for the benefit of the victim. In most cases the perpetrator could care less if their victim forgives them or not. That is their own problem to deal with in karmic payback.

But the victim can end their own pain by understanding that holding onto the thought is only prolonging their own pain.

The actual words “I forgive you for ...” do not necessarily need to be spoken directly to the perpetrator. They can be expressed verbally just to oneself or to others, the forgiveness can be written down on paper (by hand) and then burned. It can also be a face-to-face conversation with the perpetrator. The point is to get it out of yourself and into the atmosphere where it can dissipate and no longer cause you pain.

Exercise for allowing forgiveness to flow and eliminating the pain.

1. Relax in a meditative posture, sitting upright correctly.
2. Take 3 deep cleansing breaths.
3. Visualize the action that caused the pain.
4. Visualize and feel the heavy cloud of pain and depression that hangs about you. Feel the weight of your anger. Feel the dampness of it in your lungs and how difficult it is to breathe because of the emotional shroud.
5. Unless it was a random act of violence or you were a young child at the time, visualize your role in the event. We always play a role in everything that happens to us. Be honest with yourself – what was your role?
6. First you have to forgive yourself for the part you played. Forgive yourself now.
7. Forgive the other person for their actions. Make this a sincere, from the heart forgiveness.
8. Now visualize the shroud beginning to dissipate. Take some deep cleansing breaths – breathe in the universal life energy through the crown chakra and convert it into love energy in the heart chakra. Use the converted heart energy to break up the shroud by visualizing releasing your breath through the heart chakra. Once the shroud is gone, continue sending out heart energy to encase your entire being – all ethereal layers of your physical and spiritual bodies that extend out about 3-4 feet from your skin.
9. Keep filling the encasement with converted heart energy. Feel the healing properties of the heart energy. Allow it to fill in all of the holes in your being where once the anger resided. Do you feel the difference? This is the energy you need for caring, not anger and hate.
10. Whenever you feel yourself being consumed by the anger again, repeat the exercise to move the negativity out and allow the healing energy to soothe you.

It may take several times repeating the exercise for the mentation to stop and for you to truly



RK San Antonio Garden



Jeanell
Jordan:
a
"Lifetime
Beginner",
too.

Art from the Sanghas by Rose Cirigliano

Jeanell Jordan OKC Artist

I met Jeanell Jordan about 5 years ago when she came to the RK New York City Dharma Center for a study session. At that time she travelled with her beloved Shakuhachi flute. She played the most melodic sounds. I sat entranced. When looking for an article to write about in this issue, I thought of Jeanell and her art form. I contacted Jeanell and she consented to an interview.

1. RC: How long are you playing the Shakuhachi?

I started studying the Shakuhachi in November of 2006.

2. RC: How did you become interested in playing the flute?

I was at an international festival, an hour from where I lived, when I first saw someone in a Taiko group playing the Shakuhachi. I loved what I heard and went up to the man after the performance and asked him if he could teach someone to play "that thing". I had no idea what it was called, I just knew I needed to learn to play it. He kind of laughed at me and then said he could. Then I asked where he lived. To my surprise he lived 10 minutes from where I was working.... That's how I met my first teacher, Brian Wagetsu Franklin. Two weeks after I met Brian was when I went on my first trip to Japan for Dansan 2006. When I got home I called him and for the next 6 yrs, every Wednesday, he worked with me. About nine months into our lessons he said I would need to start learning from his teacher Ronnie Nyogetsu Reishin Seldin, who lives in New York. For five years I took lessons on MP3, with Brian's help.

3. RC: To whom did you go to for advice?

While reading Founder Niwano's book "Lifetime Beginner" I read that he played the Shakuhachi. I set a goal to play at his Stupa at Headquarters. A few years ago I was able to do that. Rev. Yasuko Hildebrand from Oklahoma was in Tokyo at the same as I was and she took me to Headquarters so that I could play "Dharani" and "Choshi" at the Stupa.

I've been very lucky to have traveled to Japan 5 times, twice for Rissho Koseikai and three time for the Shakuhachi. I've bought my flutes directly from the maker and had lessons from Shakuhachi Master Yodo Kurahashi II. The people in Japan were always surprised to hear that the group played

Shakuhachi. They always would say how hard the flute is to play. They were even more surprised to find out the women in the group also played.

4. RC: Have you had any interesting experiences when playing or traveling with your instrument? I'm thinking of the story you told me on one of your trip back from Tokyo when you entered the US Customs with your Shakuhachi. Would you share it with our readers?

Traveling with the flute has been interesting at times. In the US, the TSA agents have pulled me aside wanting to search the case.. In Japan, when they asked, and I told them Shakuhachi, they treated my case like a precious gem. You would have thought they were holding a new born baby. Such respect they showed. Because of Risscho Kosai-kai and the Shakuhachi I have had so many wonderful experiences. I am very grateful.

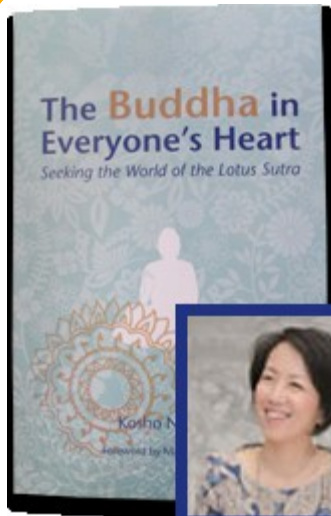


Jeanell Jordan and
her Shakuhachi flute

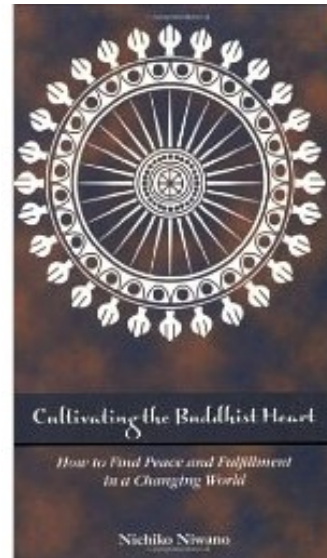
In Tokyo, 2013, with NY, Boston and Chicago members. Jeanell (L.) carrying her Shakuhachi over her shoulder after she received her Dharma Teacher Title.



Bulletin Board



Rev Koshi Niwano's new book is now available for purchase. To obtain your copy contact your minister or RKINA



Cultivating the Buddhist Heart is now available as a Kindle eBook!

Purchase your copy on Amazon for \$4.99 and receive your instant download

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Traveling ?

Try visiting
one of your
sister sanghas!



Locations and Calendar of Centers

Rissho Kosei-kai International of North America (Los Angeles CA)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Orange County (CA)

Rissho Kosei-kai of Ft. Myers

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Church of Hawaii (Pearl City, Oahu)

Rissho Kosei-kai Maui Dharma Center (HI)

Rissho Kosei-kai Kona Dharma Center (HI)

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Church of Los Angeles (CA)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of San Antonio (TX)

Rissho Kosei-kai of Buddhist Center of Arizona (Tucson)

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Colorado (Denver)

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of San Diego (CA)

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Las Vegas (NV)

Rissho Kosei-kai of San Francisco (CA)

Rissho Kosei-kai of Seattle's Buddhist Learning Center (WA)

Rissho Kosei-kai of Sacramento (CA)

Rissho Kosei-kai of San Jose (CA)

Lotus Buddhist Circle of San Mateo (CA)

Rissho Kosei-kai of Vancouver (Canada)

Rissho Kosei-kai of New York (NY)

Rissho Kosei-kai of Chicago (IL)

Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Tampa Bay (FL)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Oklahoma (OKC)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Dallas

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Denver (CO)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Klamath Falls (OR)

Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Dayton (OH)