



**You have just met
REIYUKAI BUDDHISM**

The aim of this leaflet is to guide you into this brand new experience. It will be one of your practice companions.

**HOW TO DEVELOP OUR HUMANITY
AND HELP OTHER HUMAN BEINGS FIND
FULFILMENT**

How can we improve human beings' intrinsic quality, the quality of their personal, familial and social lives as well as the quality of national and international relations and therefore actively contribute to peace in the world ?

At the dawn of the 21st century, Reiyukai offers human beings, whatever their race, gender or beliefs a surprisingly modern experience. Addressing lay people, it puts within their reach Buddha Shakyamuni's age-old teachings only reserved so far to monks and scholars. It enables them to give life to these teachings within their daily lives. Following in the Buddha's footsteps, each one strives through conscious actions to develop their humanity by helping others find fulfilment therefore taking part in social harmony.

Passing on to their children a better world: such is Reiyukai members' target.

ADOPTING THE RIGHT ATTITUDE TO A NEW TEACHING

Any apprenticeship requires a certain attitude: the conscience not to know in advance, the desire to learn as well as confidence in those who were here first. This very attitude, adopted at the start of our search, will have to accompany it from now on. And if one can apparently sum up the Reiyukai practice as follows: reciting the Sutra and sharing with others Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings, it is nevertheless essential to accompany these actions with a very particular spirit and intention. Let us thus aspire with confidence to create in ourselves a virgin and fertile space where all our practice experiences can come to life.

CAN WE BECOME BODHISATTVA?

Let us open our family album.

It is not difficult to notice how much we resemble some of its members. Indeed, the similarity is not only physical and we come from these countless family links woven for generations. Similarly our inner self has been forged through the many relationships created since our birth. Each of these relationships has moulded us through reciprocal influences.

Such is the reality of human beings who are born and grow up connected to others. It is also on the field of these relationships that following the Buddha's example, we can develop our humanity until perfection. Sharing the teachings of Reiyukai Buddhism with those who are around us, encouraging them and accompanying them on that path throw light on these relationships with a brand new meaning and make true fulfilment emerge.

While sincerely wishing that all human beings linked to us -and particularly our practice companions -aspire to develop themselves too, we endeavour to help others on the path to evolution in a dynamic, creative and concrete ways. That everyday commitment, along with our reading of the Sutra is a source of endless realizations and transformations: transformation of our inner selves and consequently of the very essence and quality of our relationships with others and with our environment.

WHY DO WE READ THE SUTRA?

Let us consider the reality of our life and of our heart. We will notice then that we are often self satisfied and more naturally inclined to satisfy our needs or personal desires than to work for our progress as well as for the others'.

Reciting the Sutra awakens a different kind of heart: the heart of someone for who progress, whether personal or universal, is the essential ingredient in life. It encourages us to discover and to go beyond our own limits and develop an inquiring spirit in all our relationships. Only by cultivating such a heart will we pass on a better world to our children.

If the last century was in many domains - social, scientific, technique and so on - the century of progress, this very notion, object of many reflections, is imbued with our ideas and conceptions. The state of human perfection realised by the Buddha in his life is a very difficult state to comprehend. It is nevertheless towards this state, on this path that we, Reiyukai members, aspire to tread on step by step, guided by the Sutra, the book that is a testimony of the Buddha's enlightenment path.

Reciting the Sutra is also the privileged moment when we connect ourselves to our relatives, our nearest and dearest and to our ancestors, wishing that we might progress together. It is to make us become conscious of this link with our family that we have placed a small wooden plank where one can read our wish for our ancestors to aspire to progress towards enlightenment.

The state of mind with which we start reciting the Sutra is essential. Our goal is to discover a teaching unknown to us so far without dwelling on hasty individual interpretations since whatever we can understand while reciting it, we will only realise the meaning of what is written in the Sutra when we accomplish the practice of bodhisattva. The true meaning of the Sutra being beyond our intellectual understanding, we invite you to let it permeate in to you more than to read it as any ordinary book.

LISTENING AND VERIFYING

In order to benefit from this extraordinary experience constituted by the transmission of the Buddha's teaching and the reading of the Sutra, we encourage you to seek for the meaning in which you can realise these actions by your elders. The most experienced Reiyukai members will pass on to you living teachings. By verifying them, you will make them alive in your turn.

There are so many qualities that we need to develop: the ability to hear the teaching and the heart to look for the meaning of what is being said, not with our head but thanks to our actions; such is the essential prerequisite to real progress! Let us be vigilant and preciously retain this essential attitude all along our path. Your elders follow exactly the same process; they seek teachings by their elders and by testing the truth of these teachings, they bring life to practice. This is how the "water of the Dharma" is passed on.

WHERE CAN YOU HEAR THE TEACHINGS?

Sharing your experience with other members within your family of practice and at larger gatherings will also enable you to hear teachings, to validate the meaning of your experience and to go deeper into it.

You can participate in

- a monthly gathering of your practice family
- a monthly gathering at the Reiyukai Centre in Nantes - France.
- a "Mirokusan" seminar, once or twice a year at the Reiyukai Centre in Nantes - France.
- spontaneous meetings or discussions at your elders' place.

We do hope that reading this guide will enable you to find a leading thread to approach this brand new experience and that you will be able to clarify the questions that may have arisen from your search.

Good luck to you! / Take heart!

THE STORY OF REIYUKAI

Kakutaro KUBO founded Reiyukai in Japan in 1920 as an answer to the dehumanisation and degradation of the world which he witnessed at that time. According to him, the progress of each human being was the key to the improvement of our contemporary societies and to the development of peace in the world. He considered the teaching of Buddhism -as exposed in the Mahayana (Great Vehicle)- the road able to lead men towards their accomplishment. He created then a lay practice based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra (the ultimate sutra of this tradition) that could thus enable each one to put into practice and to realise with others the teaching(s) of Shakyamuni Buddha in their daily lives. Along with Kimi KOTANI, co-founder and first president of Reiyukai, he guided the members of Reiyukai on this path towards *realisation* until his death in 1944.

After the Second World War, the Japanese were essentially preoccupied by the economical rebuilding of their country. Kimi KOTANI found it essential to work at the same time for the construction of human beings: she invited Reiyukai members to work twice as hard towards their evolution and everybody's development. Since 1950, Reiyukai has particularly paid attention to the young. It has created meeting and practice places; a junior and a high school were built, opened to practicing as well as non practicing students whose main aim was young people 's harmonious development keeping outside any competitive spirit. At the same time, Reiyukai got involved in many a social and humanitarian actions, sometimes collaborating with NGOs such as the Red Cross. These actions are still taking place today. In Japan, Reiyukai is registered for the Education ministry as a religious congregation, directed to the public benefit.

Before her death in 1971, founder Kimi KOTANI expressed the wish Reiyukai be born in other countries in order to contribute to building peace in the world together. Since 1972, Reiyukai has developed in 18 countries.

In 1975, Claudine CARAYOL went to Japan motivated by her interest in Japanese culture and philosophy. She met there both her husband and thanks to him Reiyukai. In 1979, Claudine and Yasukazu SHINODA, inspired by their personal motivation settled in France where Reiyukai took the form of a non-profit organization conforming to a law passed in 1901; each member paid a 20 F monthly subscription, which was about the same in every country of the world. In 1985, thanks to the subscriptions of Japanese members -donations having always been strictly forbidden since the creation of Reiyukai- Reiyukai purchased a building in order to offer French Reiyukai members a place to meet and practice.

Like Japan-Reiyukai, and alongside their Buddhist search, French Reiyukai members organize social and cultural events among different associations. In 1987, "Forum Mélinière", whose aim is mostly cultural was born. It has provided conferences, diverse exhibitions, foreign language lessons, theatre, choir, activities for the family... Since 1988 "the Cooperation Circle" has aimed at working for better human relationships within companies. In 1989, "Starting Point". organized the first national youth competition and took part in the international finals under the aegis of the UNESCO. Young people from many countries had thus the opportunity to exchange about the positive plans they had realised in order to shape and build their lives.

In 1997, France-Reiyukai became a member of the European Buddhist Union which federates European Buddhist communities.

Today the organization has about 2000 members.

THE BUDDHA

Crown prince of the Sakya clan, Buddha was born about 2,500 years ago in Kapilavatsu, India. His patronymic name was Gautama and his own name was Siddharta.

In his childhood, on his father's orders, he was kept away from all outside contacts. Despite this precaution, he discovered old age, diseases and death on successive secrete outings. Deeply moved by these different states of life, he decided to look for the means of putting an end to human sufferings. On his fourth outing he met a begging monk who, in spite of his shabby-looking appearance shows absolute mastery and great serenity. As a consequence, he left his palace, his family and became a begging monk: it was the beginning of a long quest.

He spent many years among Brahmans, experimented different paths leading to wisdom and knowledge. He developed his conscience thus and sharpened his vision on the nature of life phenomenon.

After years of endless search, he attained enlightenment, the revelation of liberating knowledge while meditating under the tree of the Bodhi. Gautama became the Buddha, the enlightened, the one who has reached the Bodhi, supreme enlightenment.

He spent the rest of his life passing on teachings to his disciples enabling them to progress on the path to enlightenment.

THE SUTRA

The Reiyukai practice is based on one of the fundamental texts of Mahayana Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra of the True Law, commonly known as the Lotus Sutra.

The Buddha's teaching, often called the Buddha's Dharma on account of its Sanskrit origin, kept in memory by his disciples was later transcribed and compiled in collections called "sutras".

There are numerous sutras: people say there are more than 84,000 of them! Among all these spiritual accounts, the Lotus Sutra enjoys a special prestige. Being the Buddha's ultimate teaching, it is said to be the most precious of the Mahayana's sutras, the "king of the sutras" the very teaching of which the vast majority of Asian Buddhism refers to.

In order to enable people to recite the Buddha's teaching on a daily basis, founders Kubo and Kotani created a compendium -called the "Blue Sutra"- out of extracts of the Lotus Sutra and of two other sutras respectively named "Inmeasurable Meaning Sutra" and the "Practice by Meditation on Fugen Bodhisatva", the collection of the three constituting the Threefold Lotus Sutra.

Reiyukai members use the Blue Sutra as well as the complete version of the Lotus Sutra.

BODHISATTVA

The Sanskrit word “bodhisattva” is generally translated as “awakening being”. It describes a human being who aspires to becoming an utterly realised being, a Buddha.

As a consequence there are infinite and various actions evoked in the Lotus Sutra, actions realised by numerous bodhisattvas, compassionate human beings, aspiring to relieving human beings from all sufferings. Examples of benevolence, of courage and so on, bodhisattvas, searching for enlightened wisdom are described in the sutras of Mahayana Buddhism as adorned with extraordinary qualities and immeasurable merits.

Yet, here is the essential message delivered by the Lotus Sutra: the supreme path is that of the bodhisattva who passes on the Buddha’s teaching. This bodhisattva, spurred on by the loving kindness that all living beings without exception may one day reach enlightenment, helps and accompanies those who wish to get on that path. The Lotus Sutra incites each one to become a bodhisattva “teacher of the Dharma”.

Such a bodhisattva, by accomplishing this practice consisting in passing on the Buddha’s teaching inevitably realises the “six perfections” in himself. According to the Sutra the benefits that result for the world and for himself from this very practice of transmission are incomparable and infinite. It is such a bodhisattva that the Reiyukai encourages us to become.

THE LAW OF CONDITIONED PRODUCTION OF CAUSES AND EFFECTS

Reiyukai Buddhism is based on the concept that each one moves forward towards wisdom provided they understand the essential meaning the law of relation and interdependence of all that exist takes in their lives and on condition they realize how that law is at work within themselves. This law is the basic principle of Buddhism; it is also called the law of conditioned production of causes and effects.

According to this principle, the universe is a network where all phenomena are linked and interdependent in time and space. Nothing can exist on its own; as soon as something exists, it is necessarily linked in some ways to other things that exist or that have existed in the past and will have consequences in the future. The world of things, of living beings and of ideas- the very network of existence- is an indication of the conditioned production of causes and effects. This insight into the interrelation of all that exists enables us to understand the connection we have to past, present and future phenomena and to our kind.

Realising that everything changes and that nothing can exist independently offers human beings the unexpected possibilities to transform themselves on the basis of their present reality.

KARMA AND KARMIC RELATIONSHIPS

Karma (in English: action and result of this action), one of the basic notions of Buddhism, is directly linked to the law of conditioned production of causes and effects. Karma is the mechanism which begins with an action and leads to its consequences, which means each action will have an effect. According to the law of conditioned production of causes and effects, karmic effects go on forever across everything that exists. Our present ways of being is the karmic appearance of our past actions and of our ancestors'. In the same way, the form our life will take in the future will be the result of our present actions, in other words of the karma that we are generating today.

We, human beings, have all inherited the karma passed on by our parents and our ancestors and are submitted to the influence of the karma that we and our surroundings generate everyday. From birth until death, our karma (actions and results of these actions) is in perpetual evolution.

The practice of Reiyukai leads to a greater awareness of the principle of conditioned production of causes and effects and helps us become aware of the existence of karma. It enables us to acquire deeper and wider knowledge of how we are linked on the vertical axis of time to our parents, ancestors and our descendants and on the horizontal axis, in the present to all those who are around us. Practice enables us to understand we are free to change our life radically. It teaches us to engender positive karma from which awareness, generosity and compassion will spring. We will thus influence the world we live in in a positive way and we will actively contribute to social harmony and peace.

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