

H i s t o r y

T h e F o u n d e r s



Kimi Kotani was born on 10th January 1901 in the rural village of Miura, Japan. In 1925 she married the elder brother of Kakutaro Kubo, Yasukichi Kotani, and began to work with Kubo to expand Reiyukai. Following her husband's death, she went on to become the organisation's first president in 1930. After Kubo's death in 1944, she widened the scope of Reiyukai as a social welfare group as well as creating numerous programmes aimed at younger

members of society. She is remembered today as a dynamic force who is largely responsible for creating the Kokoro-no-kai we know today. She died on February 9th, 1971.



Kakutaro Kubo was born on 7th January 1892 in Kominato, a small fishing village in Japan, and later moved to Tokyo where he was employed by the Imperial Household Ministry. He believed that if every person could reach their full potential then not only would they find true happiness but society as a whole would be improved. He set out, during the 1920s and 1930s, to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra with Kimi Kotani and officially registered

Reiyukai with the City of Tokyo in 1940. He carried on tirelessly until his death on 18th November 1944.

T h e F o u n d a t i o n s

In the early 1920s, the founders formulated the teachings and registered Reiyukai, a Buddhist association aimed at spreading the philosophy of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra: leading the people away from despair and turbulence

into inner hope and calm. The early 1920s were a difficult time of change in Japan and Kubo felt that people needed a way of taking control of their lives. He set out to address the role each of us has to play in society. The idea that through the self development of every individual we can achieve a better society. It was felt to be important to really take the philosophies of Shakyamuni into people's daily lives and for them to not just be told what to do or think by monks and nuns.

After Kotani then joined Kubo and became the organisation's first president, they worked together and it went on to grow and grow. Then later on in 1954, Kotani believed that as Japan was developing and trying to rebuild that the youth of Japan were being left behind and so the Reiyukai Youth Group was founded. Many youth and social welfare programmes have since been established and still run today. Kotani died in 1971 and Tsugunari Kubo became the President of Reiyukai. In the 1970s Reiyukai began to expand outside of Japan.

The UK group was started in 1976 by Mr Hiromi Hasegawa and is still here, active today, in the Kokoro-no-kai Oriental Arts Centre in Norwich. The name has changed from Reiyukai since there was a split in Japan and Tsugunari Kubo resigned as President of Reiyukai and started up Kokoro-no-kai (Heart of the Lotus) which we are now a part of. It is felt that Kokoro-no-kai philosophy still stays true to the philosophy of the founders.

Other countries who are now in Kokoro-no-kai are Taiwan, Korea, Lithuania and of course part of Japan.

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Philosophy & Practice

Philosophy

To be a human being is to be conscious of divisions – between ourselves and others, between us and the environment, between what we are and wish to be. So all humans wish to improve ‘their lot’ in life, which for better or worse makes us human. This perception of separation, together with a desire for greater unity and harmony, is central to the philosophy of Reiyukai, an international movement of people who wish to discover a more fulfilled way of life through the development and refinement of their inner nature – a personal evolution.

The Kokoro no kai approach is human-centred – focusing on the untapped potential of all men and women rather than upon any supernatural being or object of worship. Thus it is not necessary to renounce or negate one’s personal faith or beliefs when putting the Kokoro no kai approach into practice.

Nothing which exists does so in isolation. – Everything in the universe comes into existence through its relationship or reaction with other things – all are inter-related, together forming a unity in which each has a role to play. When applied to human life this idea means that although we may perceive ourselves as separate beings, but we in fact cannot divorce ourselves from our environments – both inner and outer.

We are what ourselves and others have made us. – Our situations and relationships influence and mould us in countless different ways. It is therefore in our best interests to become more aware of these influences and, if necessary, re-programme and improve ourselves, our thoughts, attitudes, reactions and relationships with others. It’s also important to understand where others have come from to understand their perspective.

Everything in our past has led us to this moment in time, this situation. – It is important that we reflect on our upbringing, our conditioning and upon the consequences of our everyday actions, for ourselves, for others and for the future. We can then endeavor to infuse every moment with insight and

positivity. Through this it is impossible to discover more fully who or what we are, or wish to be, and achieve new direction and motivation in life.

Practice

Recitation

This is a traditional Buddhist practice and one of the core practices of Kokoro no kai. As well as recitation performed as a form of Shugyo, members recite the Sutra on a regular daily basis, both as a form of meditation and as a means of learning from the wisdom of the text being recited. Members chiefly recite the Blue Sutra and chant the phrase, 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo,' meaning, 'I devote myself to the wonderful Dharma of the Lotus Sutra,' in Japanese, which is known as **Odaimoku**. The Blue Sutra is a condensed version of the Lotus Sutra, which was compiled by Kakutaro Kubo and published in 1928. It is much shorter than the Lotus Sutra and can therefore be recited in its entirety by members in their everyday lives.

Shugyo

This is, in Mahayana Buddhism, any action which is done with the intent to improve a certain aspect of oneself, and which is carried out within a certain period of time set by oneself. Here in Norwich we often combine Shugyo practice with the practical cleaning of the centre, from the dojos to the changing rooms, or an area in our community in Norwich.

Shakai Hoshi

This means social contribution and has always been an important part of our practice as a means of creating a better society. As well as being spiritually active within the community, Reiyukai deems it of equal importance to participate in welfare activities.

Bodhisattva Practice

A Bodhisattva is someone taking active steps towards self-improvement using the teachings of Shakamuni Buddha while at the same time inspiring others to do the same. The way they achieve this is called Bodhisattva practice, and they are a very important part of life for any lay follower of the teachings. Though Bodhisattva practices vary from person to person, they can include *michibiki*, *sange*, having

faith in the Buddha's World and various social welfare activities. The founders felt that only by putting these things into practice in one's daily life could one understand the teachings.

Odaimoku

We chant the phrase, 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo,' meaning, 'I devote myself to the wonderful Dharma of the Lotus Sutra,' in Japanese for a set amount of time. This is a form of chanting meditation.

The real practice of Kokoro-no-kai is the aspiration to live with integrity and awareness. – That ideal is the glue that holds Kokoro no kai members together with one another. We nurture and support that ideal, that spontaneous minute-to-minute mindfulness, by various forms of practice.

Awareness brings with it responsibilities and challenges. – We should try to be honest with one another, but not in an aggressive, resentful or superior patronising fashion. Solutions to problems are not found through argument or imposition, but by a mutual willingness to find that suitable solution. We should also try and respect one another's feelings and ideas, however irrelevant or harmful they may appear. These feelings and ideas will naturally change as individuals develop and transform themselves. The honest and open exchange of personal experiences, feelings, visions and aims is always encouraged as a means to improve our inter-actions, so informal discussion groups, open to all, are a good base for practice.

We should reflect on the environment, inner and outer, we create, for others and ourselves. – To help us do this, Kokoro no kai members are encouraged to spend a few minutes each day, reading and reflecting upon the Blue Sutra or chanting Odaimoku (More on this and other practices such as Shugyo in 'Origins and the Basics'). These affirm the reality, and even the inevitability of human evolution, towards greater wisdom, insight and compassion.

Practice should not remain a purely mental concept, but should be expressed in everyday life – Our speech and reactions reveal us to the world, however much we try and project images of ourselves that we believe will win us respect, love power etc. For those Kokoro no kai members that wish to further

formalise their practice to help bridge the gap between inner determination and self-expression, there is the group practice of reciting The Blue Sutra aloud with others. A benefit of this form of practice is that the wisdom of the text seeps naturally into the mind, with less need for formal study.

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Activities & Meetings

Monthly Meetings

First Sunday of Every Month at 11:30am in the Shrine Room

Although our practice is primarily based at home, with most members having their own family altar, we regularly visit the Centre to recite together from the Blue Sutra followed by discussion. Free and open to all.

Odaimoku

Every Tuesday at 7:45pm in the Shrine Room

We chant the phrase, 'Namu Myoho Renge Kyo,' meaning, 'I devote myself to the wonderful Dharma of the Lotus Sutra,' in Japanese for a set amount of time. This is a form of chanting meditation. Free and open to all.

Peace Pagoda and Buddhist Temple Visit

Come with us to an authentic Buddhist Temple and stunning Peace Pagoda in Willen Park, Milton Keynes on Sun 19th June.

We will be leaving here at 7am and coming home around 7pm.

We have visited them many times in the past and it is always a wonderful day out full of culture, prayers and interesting speeches from people of all faiths.

If you are interested then please contact Danielle on 01603 630857, kokoronokai_uk@yahoo.com or leave your details behind the bar and we will get back to you about transport and the day in general. Free lunch and only cost is petrol contribution.

The President of Kokoro-no-kai visits Norwich

Dr and Mrs Kubo will be visiting our centre on Thursday September 1st 2005.

This is their first visit in many years and an update on what will be going on that day will be posted nearer the time.

IF THERE'S EVER ANY SORT OF AN ACTIVITY, FOR EXAMPLE A SOCIAL OR COMMUNITY WELFARE ACTIVITY, OR MEETINGS THAT YOU THINK WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO DO THEN DO LET US KNOW AND WE'LL SEE WHAT WE CAN DO.

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