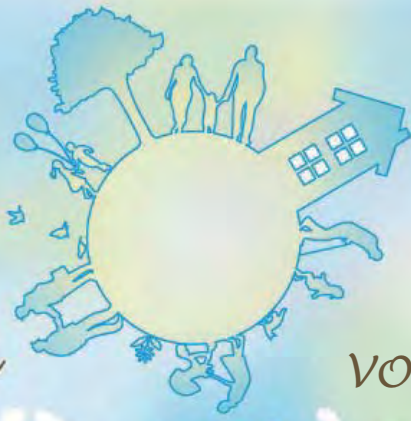


# Living the LOTUS

*Buddhism in Everyday Life*

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2019

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Founder's Essay

## Kind Words of Recognition

THERE may be people around you who shock you by what they dare to do nonchalantly and without any compunction. I suspect you might even reach the end of your patience with them, thinking, “What kind of person would do that?” But I would like you to put yourself in that person’s place.

I bet that person has closed their mind to the criticism and reproach of those around them, and has shielded themselves with layers of defensive armor. Even if you try to straighten them out by reproaching them, they probably aren’t going to listen to you.

As long as people don’t sincerely feel that things are unacceptable, they won’t change no matter how often they’re scolded. What’s important is knowing

how to appeal to their hearts so they will get serious. All this takes is a single point of heart-to-heart contact.

What people who protect themselves by retreating into their shells really want is someone who can be their true ally.

The “kind words of a bodhisattva” is an expression that means speaking with tender words, but even if you are not a good verbal communicator, if you believe the person and can give their concerns a sincere nod of recognition, this alone will become a magnificent “kind word.”

Nikkyo Niwano, *Kaiso zuikan* 9 (Kosei Publishing, 1997), pp. 232–33

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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.

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.

## Letting Your Own Treasure Shine Forth

Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



### An Era in Which Being Confident Is Difficult

“That’s fine for them, but not for us.” This is the kind of set phrase that parents say when their children ask them to buy something and then make comparisons to other people or other homes. We can also interpret this phrase as expressing, in easily understandable words, that each person is pursuing his or her own unique way of life—therefore, there is no need to make comparisons between yourself and others.

However, being jealous of other people, or sometimes feeling inferior to them, may be a natural human sentiment. For many people, these emotions are the springboard for making greater efforts, developing their potential, and improving themselves.

Buddhism teaches us how comparing ourselves to other people can cloud our mind when we look at things. Even if we do feel envious of other people, it is important that we control our emotions so we do not develop excessive desires or pointless enmity.

I think that recently there has been an increase in the number of people who have very little confidence in themselves and have even convinced themselves that their lives are without value. Chapter 4 of the Lotus Sutra, “Faith and Understanding,” contains the parable of the rich elder and his poor son. The poor son who appears in this parable is one such person. The son was living a vagabond life, but he came to be trusted by the rich elder who employed him—so much so that he was put in charge of the storehouses of gold, silver, and other treasures. Even so, the son still thought of himself as unworthy and was unable to shake his servile feelings.

So why are more and more people, like the poor son, unable to be confident? It might be because this is an era in which there is an overabundance of information that stimulates desires. This leads many people to compare themselves with others and surmise economic disparity based on whether they are able to afford many or few things in life.





## Bringing Forth Your Buddha-Nature

There is a value system that says that if you are poorer than other people, you must be unhappy and suffering. This value system is, in fact, not definite, but if being poorer than other people is what makes you lose confidence and hope, it is no one other than you yourself who has determined that, based on this value system, you are unhappy. Our lives change according to causes and conditions, and nothing exists in a fixed state. Therefore, if you let yourself suffer from having this label attached to you and end up losing confidence and hope, the life you have received may be wasted.

An inferiority complex and the desire to improve oneself are opposite sides of the same coin. Precisely because there is, at the bottom of your heart, the desire to lead a better life, negative feelings occasionally crop up. However, if you become obsessed with the idea that your own unhappiness is society's fault or the fault of other people, the inferiority complex that should nourish maturation instead goes no further than becoming fuel for whining, and may not lead to self-improvement.

Returning to the parable of the poor son, when the rich elder's life was nearing its end, he declared to the people gathered around his bed, "This man is my son, who went missing when he was a small child. All of my wealth and possessions belong to him." This is the moment when the poor son, who thought himself unworthy, was made aware of his own treasure (his buddha-nature). The rich elder's words are imbued with the real meaning they convey—that all people are children of the Buddha, and that they are the very buddha-nature that is one and the same as the Buddha. Therefore, they should be confident and let their own treasure (their buddha-nature) shine forth.

Through this parable, the Buddha is telling us that instead of only being satisfied with the joy of becoming aware of your own treasure, if you impart your awareness to someone who is not yet aware of his or her own treasure and continue to have interactions with such a person that make his or her treasure shine forth, your own buddha-nature shines forth even brighter.

Having faith in the Buddha's teaching and understanding it is the meaning of "faith and understanding." Therefore, let's have faith in and understand that everyone has the treasure of buddha-nature, and continue to move forward and lead lives full of confidence.

From *Kosei*, August 2019





## The Happiness I Found Through Following the Way



Mr. Dulal Barua  
Rissho Kosei-kai of Bangladesh

*This Dharma Journey talk was presented at Rissho Kosei-kai of Bangladesh in Chittagong on October 26, 2018, during the ceremony celebrating the twentieth anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai of Bangladesh.*

**M**y name is Dulal Barua. I have a family of four—my wife, Lili, our two daughters, and myself. I serve as the head of the Ram chapter in Cox's Bazar.

Today is a significant day for Rissho Kosei-kai of Bangladesh. I am honored to present my Dharma Journey talk on this special day. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation for Rev. Noriyoshi Aritomi, minister of Rissho Kosei-kai of Bangladesh, and my fellow sangha members for giving me this opportunity.

I first learned about Rissho Kosei-kai on March 1, 2012. I would like to express my gratitude for my friend Mr. Shunil Barua, who guided me to the teach-

ing. I also would like to express my appreciation for former chapter head Mr. Ashok Kumar Barua, who has been supporting me since the day the focus of devotion was enshrined in my home altar.

Before I encountered Rissho Kosei-kai, I worked as a corporate employee and also participated in social-welfare activities. I began to lose my health suddenly and became barely able to walk. Since I had to stay in bed every day, I couldn't continue to work. Medical treatment cost me heavily, and before long I found myself in debt. I was driven into a nervous breakdown and began to lose spiritual strength. I felt miserable about myself and found it hard to even talk to people. Day to day, I suffered physically, spiritually, and financially.

During that time, I met Mr. Shunil Barua. He brought a leader of Rissho Kosei-kai to visit me. From that day forward, he continued supporting me spiritually and taught me a lot of things about Rissho Kosei-kai. While I was learning the teaching of Founder Nikkyo Niwano, I felt changes begin to take place within myself and my mind became lighter.

Thanks to Mr. Barua's help, I was able to find a solution to my many problems, and I became capable of speaking to others again. My physical strength also began to return. I started to visit the Ram chapter and participate in sutra recitation. While practicing the teachings, I realized that my mind was changing for the better, and a light of happiness came into view. It was during this time that Mr. Barua invited me to become a formal member of Rissho Kosei-kai. Since I knew that Rissho Kosei-kai had taught me the right way of living, and I already practiced the teaching



*Mr. Dulal Barua delivers his Dharma Journey talk at Rissho Kosei-kai of Bangladesh.*

and realized its value, I didn't hesitate to join the organization.

Soon after I became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai, I started to participate in the men's group. My life changed drastically by learning the teaching, which surprised my neighbors. I began sharing the teaching with friends and acquaintances in the neighborhood. With the help of the leaders of the Ram chapter, I have guided more than fifty people to Rissho Kosei-kai. My family was also impressed by the teachings, and they participate in the activities with me now.

On May 2, 2014, I was appointed an area leader of the Ram chapter. On the same day, I learned that I would be able to participate in the Advanced Lotus Sutra Seminar in Bangkok. In the seminar, I studied the importance of putting others first and feeling the suffering of others as our own. Until then, I had seldom thought of helping or encouraging others, but thanks to the seminar I realized the importance of having such a mindset. Since then I have strived to put into practice what I learned in Bangkok and share it with as many people as possible.

On June 17, 2016, I received the focus of devotion (a statue of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni), and on October 23 of the same year, I received my qualification as a Dharma teacher, both at the headquarters in Tokyo. While I was in Japan, I joined other members of the center to visit the homes of both members and nonmembers to share the Dharma as part of the Dharma dissemination practice. It was an important experience for me. On April 1 of the following year, I was appointed as head of the Ram chapter.

As a chapter head, I have met many people, hoping that they would be connected to the Buddha. I hope to help people who are suffering by putting my experience and learning to use. I believe that the leader's role is to get close to people with compassion and lead them to happiness. I was told that my role as a chapter head is an assignment from the

Buddha. With the awareness that I am a messenger of the Buddha, I am applying myself to share the teaching with many more people.

Here, I would like to express my gratitude for Rev. Aritomi, whom I respect from the bottom of my heart. I was deeply impressed by his sincere attitude to the faith and was moved to tears many times by his devoted practice of the teaching. He has been making great efforts for the happiness of the members in Bangladesh. Thanks to Rev. Aritomi, my life has changed completely.

Looking back at my life since I joined Rissho Kosei-kai, I see that the more I practiced the teachings, the happier I became. Through this practice, my attitude toward life has changed, and people around me have told me that I have changed very much and I am kinder than before. Now, when I see people who are suffering, I am concerned about them more deeply than before, and I think about how I might help them get out of the suffering. Also, when I see someone who is joyful, I can feel their joy as my own. Until I encountered Rissho Kosei-kai, I had never experienced such feelings. By practicing the teaching every day, I think compassion began to grow within me before I even recognized it.

Practicing the Way may be likened to mountaineering. Before climbing a high mountain, one may feel anxious, wondering if they can safely reach the summit or if their guide is proficient enough to lead them on the correct path. The fact that I am able to present a Dharma Journey talk today, on the twentieth anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai of Bangladesh, represents an important step in my life as a Rissho Kosei-kai member, which I think can also be likened to mountain climbing.

Looking back on the trail I have walked until now, I think I have come halfway up the mountain path leading to the summit. Soon after I joined Rissho Kosei-kai, I was anxious if I could keep my faith for the rest of my life. The way of the faith, like mountain climbing, is not free of difficulties, but I

# Spiritual Journey

have been able to keep walking until now. I was even appointed to an important role as chapter head and had an opportunity to participate in the overseas leaders' training program at the headquarters. These experiences have been invaluable treasures in my life, but I am still only halfway there, and a long path extends in front of me toward the summit.

I am not certain when I will reach the summit of my life of the faith, but when I reflect on the way I have come, I see that while earnestly practicing the Way, I have received a lot of happiness unknowingly. Furthermore, like the landscape on the mountain path suddenly opens up before your eyes when you reach a certain height, thanks to the merits I have received from my continued practice, my way of looking at things has changed and my worldview has broadened.

The more earnestly we strive to practice the Dharma, the more merits we are able to receive. On the other hand, when we think we have done something on our own, arrogance will arise in our minds at once. Arrogance brings about suffering. Studying

the teachings enables us to get rid of arrogance and realize that we are protected by the Buddha, for which we feel grateful. When we have this mindset, we become humble and can gladly attribute any success or achievement to the help of others.

When I became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai and started to climb the mountain, or the life of the faith, I was anxious about whether or not I would be able to receive guidance that would lead me along the right path. Now, I am convinced that I have walked the right way, and I believe that someday I will be able to reach the summit without fail. I hope I will continue to walk the Way toward the summit together with all of you.

For that purpose, I vow to continue to revere the buddha-nature of others, disseminate this wonderful teaching of Rissho Kosei-kai to as many people as possible, and devote myself to the practice of the Dharma so that, as proclaimed in the Members' Vow, I will be able to work to bring peace to our countries and to the world.

Thank you very much for listening.



*Mr. Barua (center), with fellow sangha members of the Ram chapter, in the yard of the chapter.*

**Living the**  
**LOTUS**

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

## The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma Chapter 10, Teachers of the Dharma (1)



### Who Is a Teacher of the Dharma?

The title of this chapter does not refer only to monks and priests; any person who teaches the Dharma of the Buddha for the sake of others is a teacher of the Dharma. This chapter is an important one because it has the most intimate connection with our own life in the faith, as it indicates the teacher's frame of mind, particularly the feeling that we—who live in the age of decline of the Dharma—must have when we teach the Dharma to others. This chapter also points out the merit of those who teach the Dharma in the right way.

A feature to be noted first is that from this chapter on, there is a distinct change of style, for the Buddha's expositions are hereafter directed to the bodhisattvas. Until this time people had held to the idea that there was a distinction between *shravakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and bodhisattvas. In earlier chapters the Buddha emphasized that there was no essential difference—they were all bodhisattvas walking the path toward buddhahood. To prove his statement, he gave predictions of buddhahood to many *shravakas* (the word *shravaka* being used here in the sense that includes *pratyekabuddhas*).

This is why the listeners from this point on are exclusively bodhisattvas. They are still the same people as before, but their feeling in listening changes drastically after they are awakened to the fact that they are actually bodhisattvas. For this reason, the Buddha shifts his address from the earlier Shariputra, Maha-Kashyapa, or monks to the Bodhisattva Medicine King or the Bodhisattva Manjushri, or simply to the bodhisattvas.

### Delighting in Hearing the Teaching

At the beginning of the chapter Shakyamuni declares, "If any of these living beings hear even a single verse or a single phrase of this wondrous Dharma Flower

Sutra from me, and through it, rejoice for even a moment, I give them an assurance of buddhahood—they will certainly attain the enlightenment of a buddha."

In our ordinary, everyday world we know from numerous examples that a person with a flexible mind that can be directly moved by the words of great figures is able to achieve great success. On the other hand, many who are interested only in personal gain may accomplish a little something or gain a bit of security, but great success may be beyond their reach, and they do nothing for history to record.

In our religious lives this is all the more true. The teaching of the Buddha is the greatest of all great things. If a person who hears the teaching is sincerely moved by and believes in it, that person will attain limitless heights.

### A Wish to Be Born

The bodhisattva is one who deserves to become a buddha but renounces rebirth in a pure land out of compassion for living beings, instead aspiring to be







reborn as a human being. This bodhisattva is not reborn as a result of good or evil karma, but because of his or her profound compassion and aspiration to save all living beings. This is called “birth by aspiration” and is what is meant by someone who is “willingly born.”

Anyone, therefore, can act as a bodhisattva because buddhas and bodhisattvas are able to be reborn as they wish, in whatever body and place they wish. In other words, they can incarnate themselves freely. Thus, we must consider that a person who receives and keeps the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and devotes him or herself to its dissemination, though appearing to be an ordinary person, may actually be a buddha or bodhisattva who has transformed him or herself to save the world. Such a person is deserving of the highest veneration.

It is also important that we ourselves realize this. Such a realization is not selfish pride, considering oneself to be enlightened or virtuous when one is actually not, but a sacred awareness. Holding to such a sacred awareness, we cannot do anything disgraceful. We cannot help but live a life that is of benefit to other people and society. Moved by what wells up from the depths of our heart, not only those things that are passively pure, we cannot help contributing

to the dissemination of the Lotus Sutra, acting naturally to benefit others. This is the state of the bodhisattva.

### Religious Practice and Veneration Sustain the Delight in Hearing the Teaching

Such an awareness as a bodhisattva becomes even firmer if we do not let our delight in hearing the teaching end, but instead try to sustain it. In other words, the joy in hearing the teaching proves its worth only if we nurture it through religious practice and veneration (or the making of offerings). Veneration is to show deep gratitude for the Buddha and his teaching, and to express sincerity through worship and other practices.

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. 99–104).

## Bringing Forth the Buddha-Nature Within Us

**I**N his message for this month, President Nichiko Niwano quotes the parable of the rich elder and the poor son, from chapter 4 of the Lotus Sutra (“Faith and Understanding”).

We live in an age when the number of people with inferiority complexes—and those who have little confidence in themselves in general—is increasing, but as the parable reveals, all of us are children of the Buddha. Everyone, without exception, has precious and shining buddha-nature. What remains important is to have faith in and understand the buddha-nature in ourselves and others and move forward and lead our lives with confidence.

As bodhisattvas, our role is to connect with all people so we can give them hope and joy, instead of thinking only of ourselves.

For this to happen, I hope all of us will strive diligently in the bodhisattva practice to recognize a precious treasure within us (our buddha-nature) while studying and practicing the teachings over and over again in our daily lives.

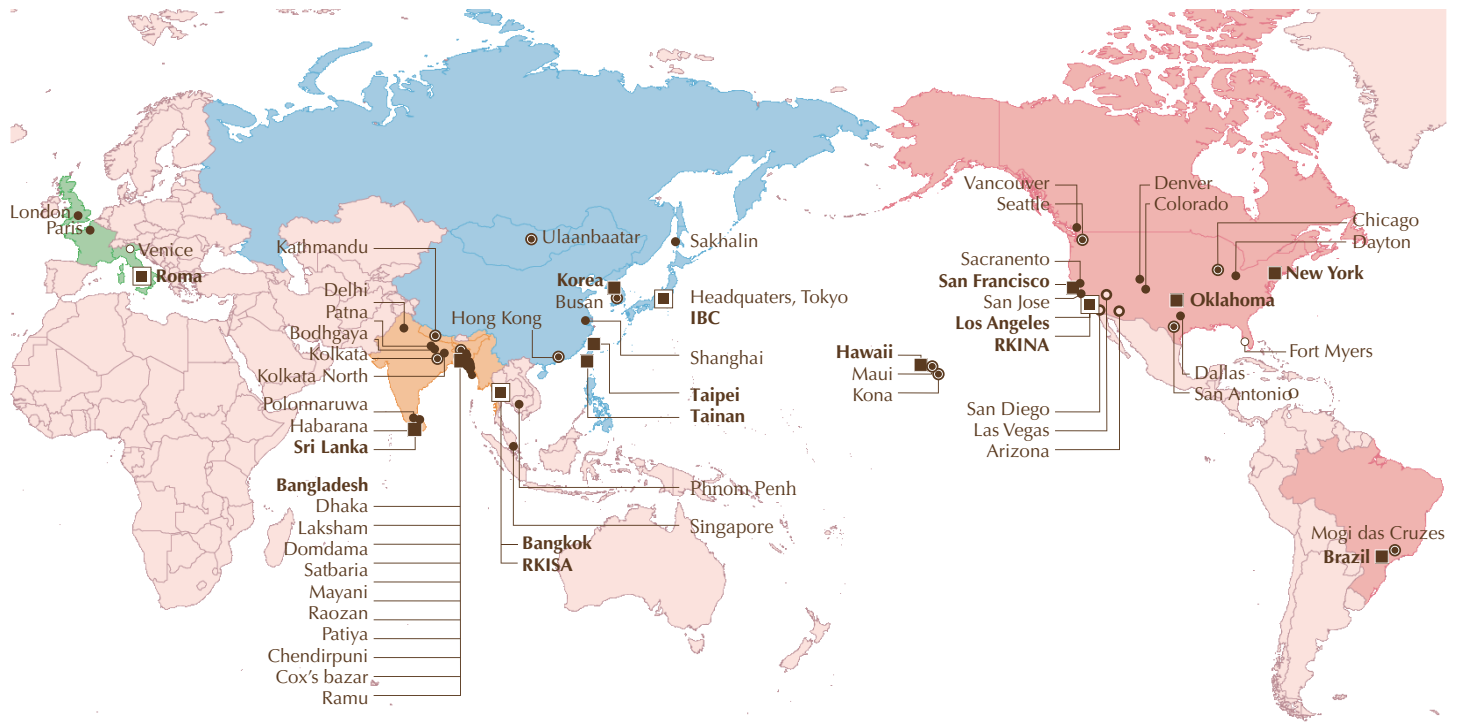
Rev. Koichi Saito  
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### Rissho Kosei-kai Damdama

Damdama Barua Para, Mirsarai, Chittagong, Bangladesh

### Rissho Kosei-kai Patiya

China Clinic, Patiya Sadar, Patiya, Chittagong, Bangladesh

### Rissho Kosei-kai Satbaria

Village: Satbaria Bepari Para, Chandanaih, Chittagong, Bangladesh

### Rissho Kosei-kai Chendhirpuni,

Village: Chendhirpuni, P.O.: Adhunogar, P.S.: Lohagara, Chittagong,  
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### Rissho Kosei-kai Dhaka

408/8 DOSH, Road No 7 (West), Baridhara, Dhaka, Bangladesh

### Rissho Kosei-kai Laksham

Village: Dhupchor, Laksham, Comilla, Bangladesh

### Rissho Kosei-kai Cox's Bazar

Ume Burmize Market, Tekpara, Sadar, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

### Rissho Kosei-kai Cox's Bazar, Ramu Shibu

### Rissho Kosei-kai Raozan

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