



## Living the Lotus Vol. 215 (August 2023)

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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.

# To Live with Peace of Mind

Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



## The Means to Ensure That All Countries Will Be Safe from Destruction

“Health,” according to the World Health Organization, “is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This mirrors the definition of happiness.

I must admit, though, that when we consider current global conditions—such as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine; the ongoing civil wars in Syria, Sudan, Myanmar, and other countries; refugee and human rights issues in different regions; and the various problems Japan has with neighboring countries—they are tantamount to barely anyone being able, in the true sense, to lead a healthy and happy life. Around the world, the political reality is being controlled by military power. Countries are keeping each other in check by expanding their military preparations, using their military power as a deterrent. Therefore, we could say that even countries and regions that at first glance appear to be peaceful are constantly exposed to these military tensions.

However, this did not only just start. In 1982, Founder Niwano sounded the alarm, saying “The present world is in a state of crisis, as World War III might break out at any moment.” He also told us that “all armaments come from the mind of fear. Distrust and the fear of being invaded by another country are spurring on the arms race” in his appeal for the urgency of the campaign, then underway, to collect signatures for a petition to abolish nuclear weapons and call for arms reductions.

That said, merely thinking about our own countries being invaded and destroyed by another country makes us feel uneasy. Moreover, protecting your country is an extension of the desire to protect your own life and the lives of your family members, so we could say that depending on armed resistance is a part of human instinct. Even so, we certainly cannot say that it is healthy to fear an invasion by another country or have the mind of hostility and vilification. In this sense, to live truly healthy and vibrant lives, we need to protect our own countries without depending on military expansion. In other words, we must try to find and realize the means to ensure that all countries will be safe from destruction.

## Just As You Love Yourself

“In the month of August— / The Sixth, the Ninth, / And the Fifteenth.” This poem, about the tragic atrocities of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Japan’s defeat in World War II, oozes with remorse and sorrow for the war and the desire to console the spirits of the dead. Seventy-eight years after the end of the war, it still moves me deeply. Therefore, I cannot help but hope, from the bottom of my heart, for our world to be one in which all people everywhere can truly live with peace of mind.

Founder Niwano said, “War and conflict arise from the mind of selfishness. They arise from the mind of discrimination. They arise from hatred and envy. Until we suppress or weaken such ugly minds, conflict will not disappear from the human world.” And he clearly stated that “Transforming the human mind through religious faith is the great, direct path toward peace.” Buddhism places the greatest value on compassion, while Christianity places it on love, and surely other religious faiths have similar teachings. According to these teachings that lead to harmony, all human beings should love and respect the lives of others as they love and respect their own irreplaceable lives. I believe that religious people have been entrusted with the mission of building such a world. The goal of collaboration and cooperation for that purpose gave birth to Religions for Peace.

In reality, though, it is difficult for ordinary people like us to stop war. However, by improving our minds through faith, we can help move our societies and nations in a better direction. This means seeing yourself and others with the mind of compassion; expanding and broadening that mind to see that you, your local community, and your country are together forming one existence; and sharing that truth with other people. Making many more friends, whether they have faith or not—friends who love and care for the countries and people of the world as they do for their own country—leads to the realization of a world in which everyone can live with peace of mind.

From *Kosei*, August 2023



# Spiritual Journey

## The Way of Accepting Suffering, Learned Through a Severe Injury

Mr. Yoshimichi Morishita  
Hamakita Dharma Center

*This Dharma Journey talk originally appeared in Japanese in the March 2023 issue of Kosei, a monthly magazine published by Kosei Publishing.*

**B**EFORE he knew it, Mr. Yoshimichi Morishita was lying on a bed in the hospital. A week after this hospitalization, his second oldest brother, Takayuki, told him the whole story of his hospitalization and the aftereffects of his accident.

It was in the middle of the night in mid-August 2016 that the accident happened. Mr. Morishita, who likes drinking, drank too much at the local festival in Hamamatsu City, Shizuoka Prefecture, and went back home extremely drunk. He went up to the second floor and entered his room. Trying to sober himself up by catching some night breeze, he sat on the windowsill. As he was drunk, he lost his balance and fell from the second-floor window. He hit the back of his head forcefully on the concrete ground. About two hours later, a passerby found him lying on the roadside. His parents immediately called an ambulance, and he was taken to the hospital.

Takayuki explained to him that he had lost his sight in his right eye, the left side of his body was slightly paralyzed, and he would continue to have higher brain dysfunction, which induces memory loss and a decline in attentiveness.

Then, Mr. Morishita had a medical examination at the ophthalmology department of the hospital where he was staying. After the examination, the doctor said to him clearly, “Your right eye will never regain its sight.” He felt the cold tone in the doctor’s voice, notifying him dispassionately of the examination result, and anger welled up inside him. The next moment, however, he was hit with anxiety for his future life and became deeply upset. In other words, he felt the fear of losing his ordinary life—working with a sense of fulfillment and living with beloved family.

Mr. Morishita had been employed as a certified care worker for many years. Two years before the accident, he was transferred to the sales department, selling and renting welfare equipment. He felt great confidence about a job that showed the results of his effort in sales figures. Moreover, he was appointed as an area manager for his great performance. He was just applying himself to his new work responsibilities when he had the accident.

As he anticipated, on the day he left the hospital, the doctor in charge of his rehabilitation told him he should give up driving because of his injuries. Driving is a must for a sales job. Every time he was told that the aftereffects would remain, he felt deprived of his freedom, which made him depressed. He couldn’t stop blaming himself for having drunk too much that night.

When he returned home, after six months of hospitalization, he received a call from his boss. The boss



*Mr. Morishita shares his Dharma Journey talk during the memorial ceremony held at the Hamakita Dharma Center.*

told him that he was allowed to take a one-year leave of absence and asked if he would be able to come to the office twice a week for the next six months before fully returning to work.

He asked his wife to drive him to his workplace and started work. However, the job he was given was not his familiar sales work but simple office tasks using a computer. Moreover, when he got down to work, he couldn't type as quickly as he was used to due to numbness in his left hand, and the screen looked blurry because he could only see it with his left eye. He got irritated with himself because he couldn't do what he was used to doing easily, and he felt miserable comparing himself with his colleagues who were working hard in the sales department. It became unbearable for Mr. Morishita to continue to work with such gloomy feelings, and he stopped going to work only a month after he had returned.

With feelings of powerlessness and self-hatred for not being able to do anything, he began staying home all day long. At home, however, he kept a high-handed attitude toward his wife, and stayed in bed most of the day, drinking sake he asked her to buy for him. Days continued like this. His wife worried about him at the beginning. However, swamped with taking care of two daughters, aged two and six, and household chores, she ran out of patience and began to complain "I need you to work for our kids." Then Mr. Morishita yelled back, "It'll never be possible for me to work with this physical handicap. Why don't *you* work instead?" Deep down inside, he wanted his wife to understand his true feelings, but his stubborn personality didn't allow him to be honest enough to show his weakness to her. He didn't try to listen to his wife's opinion and vented his anger on her, which gradually caused misunderstandings between the two of them. He thought to himself, *I'm good for nothing, but I have to support my daughters . . . But there is nothing I can do now. If only it hadn't happened . . .*

From a sheer desire to be released from suffering, he thought about committing suicide. On a day when his wife and kids went out, he put a rope through the *ranma* (the opening between ceiling and lintel), preparing to hang himself. At the moment he was about to put his head through the loop, the image of

his daughters crying came to his mind. When he thought he would never see them again, he burst into tears and slumped to the floor. Even after that, however, he still couldn't open his mind to his wife, and their relationship cooled off even further. Finally, his wife reached her limit of patience and left home with their daughters. He became more powerless and pessimistic about the future. The days when he could do nothing continued for a while. Looking back on those days, he says, "My parents were worried about me, so they brought me back to their home. Because of my injuries, I quit the job I loved and lost my family. I was at the nadir of my life."

When he was in this mood, there was a person who extended a helping hand to him. It was Mr. Hiromichi Ichise, who was formerly a senior worker at Mr. Morishita's former workplace and a member of the Hamakita Dharma Center of Rissho Kosei-kai.

When Mr. Morishita had been transferred to the sales department, it was Mr. Ichise who imparted knowledge about the work. Mr. Ichise was kind and considerate toward everyone and was trusted deeply by many clients. Mr. Morishita respected him from the bottom of his heart. When Mr. Morishita started to work again after leaving the hospital, but stopped going to his workplace after a month, Mr. Ichise sent him letters of encouragement several times. In his letters, Mr. Ichise described his painful past experiences, which he had overcome with the Rissho Kosei-kai teachings as his spiritual support. Between the lines, Mr. Morishita felt Mr. Ichise's warm and caring heart.

Furthermore, with his wife Keiko, Mr. Ichise visited Mr. Morishita many times at his home and listened intently to what he had on his mind. After a while, Mr. Ichise suggested Mr. Morishita visit the Dharma center. He replied that he would because he felt a glimmer of hope that Mr. Ichise, whom he respected, might be able to change him, even though he was in such a hopeless situation.

In November 2018, when Mr. Morishita visited the Hamakita Dharma Center for the first time, many members welcomed him with bright smiles. After that, he began visiting the Dharma center with Mr. Ichise once a month. Every time he went, the sangha

members cheerfully greeted him, saying, “Hi, it’s good to see you again. How have you been?” He was glad that they cared about him.

One day, he joined *hoza*, in which members sit in a circle and share their suffering in search of liberation in light of the Buddha’s teaching. While he listened to various experiences, he felt that he was not the only one who suffered and thought that in *hoza*, he may be able to express his true feelings.

He talked frankly, for the first time, about how his carelessness had brought about the accident, and he had lost not only his job but also his important family. He also expressed how he felt: he couldn’t find hope in his life because he still suffered from the aftereffects of the accident, and all that he felt was deep regret. The sangha members sympathized with him, saying, “You must have suffered a lot.” Mr. Morishita had been thinking until then that nobody would understand his feelings. So, when he talked to the sangha about his spiritual pain and knew he was heard and accepted, he felt so relieved.

Three months after he first visited the Dharma center, Mr. Morishita joined Rissho Kosei-kai, recommended by Ms. Sachiko Suzuki, who was always cheerful and kindly supported him. Looking back on his state of mind at that time, Mr. Morishita says now, “I felt that becoming a member may give me a chance to change myself. I thought that since I had hit rock bottom, the only way was up.” Two months later, Mr. Ichise asked him to share his Dharma Journey at the evening ceremony of memorial day for Shakyamuni Buddha. Since Mr. Morishita thought he owed his life to Mr. Ichise, he immediately accepted his offer.

On March 15, 2019, the day when he presented his Dharma experience, there was a happy coincidence; he was given permission to drive. About a month before, as recommended by his doctor, he had taken a simulator test to check his driving aptitude. On the morning of the memorial day, when he went to the hospital, the doctor said, “The test results show no problems. You can drive again,” and handed him a medical certificate. He instantly took the necessary measures to reacquire a driver’s license at a police station, and he was formally permitted to drive. Just

before the evening ceremony, Mr. Morishita added words expressing his joy at being able to drive again to the manuscript of his Dharma Journey talk, because he wanted to convey it first to the sangha members who had supported him when he had been in deep distress.

Being able to drive again made him feel that he had his freedom back. He also regained the self-esteem he had once lost and thought there still was something he could do even with the handicap. Furthermore, the happy events continued to occur; he was able to see his daughters, who lived with his wife, once a month. When he met his beloved children, he hugged them tightly with joy. He was full of joy, but at the same time, the feeling of regret for ruining his family and causing trouble for his wife and daughters welled up in his heart.

During his interaction with sangha members, some words had touched his heart. He later learned that the words were from a phrase by President Nichiko Niwano in his Dharma talk during the Uposatha Day ceremony on July 1, 2019. He said, “We frequently judge what is originally neutral as good or bad based on our own perceptions, and worry about it. Moreover, we usually tend to think that our own lives are created by ourselves. However, it seems to be true that our lives are sustained by the gods and the buddhas, our friends and acquaintances, and our family who are other than ourselves. If that is the case, before complaining on various matters, we should single-mindedly thank them who made our life possible.”

When Mr. Morishita read this Dharma guidance in Rissho Kosei-kai’s newspaper, *Kosei Shimbun*, he realized that it exactly applied to himself. He was suffering because he had concluded he was incapable of doing anything due to his injuries. What’s worse, attached to this idea, is that he hardly thanked his wife and daughters, or his parents and brothers, and even became frustrated, thinking one-sidedly that they didn’t understand his feelings. However, he realized that in fact, all phenomena are neutral, so whether or not we make our lives worthwhile depends on our way of perceiving them. When he understood this, he began to feel gratitude for being alive, despite the

aftereffects of his accident and thanks to the support of people around him. He also made a resolution that, from that time on, he would receive every occurrence with a positive outlook in order to make amends to his family and repay the kindness he had received from people around him.

In January 2020, when Mr. Morishita was looking for a job, Mr. Ichise asked if he had a will to return to his former workplace. Mr. Ichise reflects on that moment now and says, “I had some worries because he had once given up his job when he faced difficulty. But when I saw Mr. Morishita’s positive attitude in looking for a job, I thought he would be all right.” Realizing Mr. Ichise’s trust in him, Mr. Morishita replied, “I’m no longer bound to the past. I am not the same person I used to be” and showed his firm determination to return to work.

After that, with Mr. Ichise’s help, Mr. Morishita returned to his former workplace and began to work as a part-time employee. He was assigned to clerical work, but unlike before, he keenly felt the joy and gratitude for being able to work.

Now that he had experienced the worst moment of his life and knew his weaknesses, he said, “I would like to pay attention to what I can do, rather than what I can’t.” He was able to think this way, because he had encountered Rissho Kosei-kai, guided by Mr. Ichise, and reconsidered how to perceive suffering by interacting with the sangha members. His outlook on the aftereffects of his accident is also changing. Mr. Morishita says, “To be honest, I still feel regret about getting drunk and seriously injured. However, I would be glad if someday I could grow spiritually to surpass my former self—the me who had not experienced the accident and might have led an untroubled life.”

*Life is filled with unexpected things, but I’m going to enjoy any change in my life. To grow to be such a person is Mr. Morishita’s new objective in life.*



*Mr. Morishita with his Dharma parent, Mr. Ichise, at the Hamakita Dharma Center.*

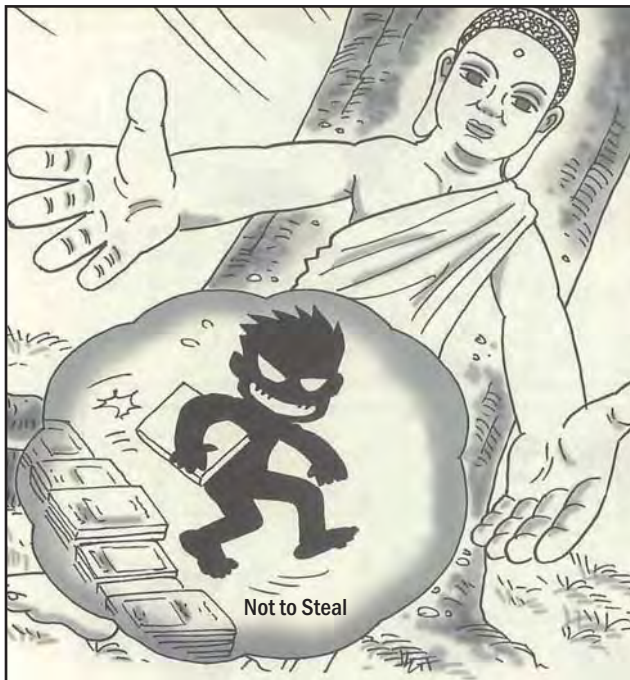
# An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

## The Lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Teachings of Buddhism

### Five Buddhist Precepts

Shakyamuni also teaches the attitudes Buddhists voluntarily keep in their daily lives. The five precepts are especially important: not to take life, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, and not to drink intoxicants.

Not to take life means not to kill living beings without reason. This includes not wasting precious resources. Not to steal prohibits theft. Not to commit adultery means refraining from sexual misconduct. Not to lie includes falsehoods that are spoken or acted out as well as malicious speech. Not to drink intoxicants means not drinking too much alcohol. It also warns us not to eat and drink too much.



#### Did You Know?

In Buddhism, the rules relating to personally regulated matters (such as ethical and moral codes) that Buddhists, both ordained and lay, vow to observe voluntarily are called precepts (Skt., *sila*, Jpn., *kai*). On the other hand, the rules built and observed for legal matters (such as statutes) by organizations are called regulations (Skt., *vinaya*, Jpn., *ritsu*).





## All Are the Buddha's Children— the Teachings of the Lotus Sutra

There are so many teachings in Buddhism that they are referred to as the eighty-four thousand Dharma gates. The number of sutras which record the teachings is in the thousands.

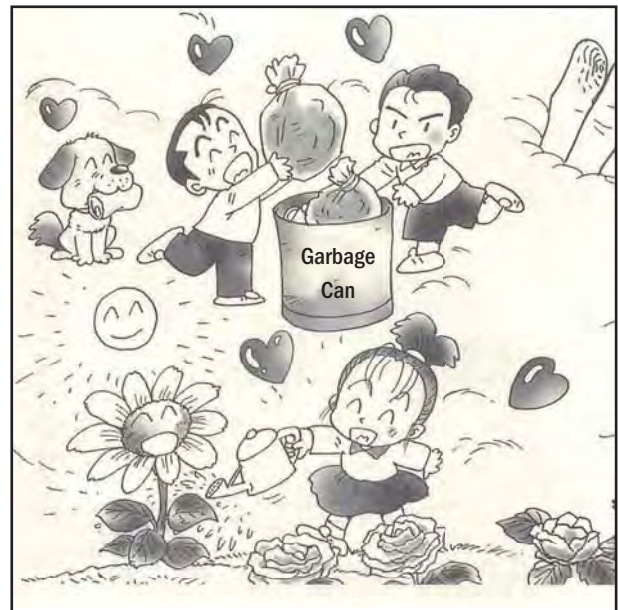
Among them all, the Lotus Sutra (the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma) has been the most venerated of Buddhist Mahayana sutras and therefore hailed as the king of all sutras.

One of the reasons is that the Lotus Sutra teaches that all people in this world are the Buddha's children, and they can all become buddhas.

In Buddhism, since ancient times, only monks who abandoned social status, renounced the world, and performed strict ascetic practices could become buddhas. The Lotus Sutra is the only sutra that teaches that anyone, whether monk or lay Buddhist, can become a buddha.

For example, have you ever felt like helping a person in trouble or felt refreshed after doing something good for others? On the other hand, after lying to your parents or friends, you are left feeling bad.

These kinds of experiences prove that we are all the Buddha's children, and all of us wish to be like the Buddha.



### Did You Know?

In chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra, "A Parable," there are words of the Buddha that read: "all of these living beings are my children." It means that since all people in this world are the Buddha's children, he will equally expound them the teachings.



## Chapter 1

Living by Aspiring: Your Point of Departure

# Everything in the World Is a Manifestation of the Buddha (2)

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano  
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



### **Because I Am Watching over You**

The Lotus Sutra passage from the “A Parable” chapter that I mentioned earlier continues as follows: “But now it [this threefold world] is filled / With disaster and trouble, / And only I am able / To rescue and protect them [living beings].”

This is the Buddha’s way of reassuring us by saying “There are many kinds of hardships in this world, but you don’t have to worry, because I am watching over you.”

Suffering can be an opportunity to experience the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha. Until we human beings realize that we are given the gift of life and sustained by the Buddha, we are driven by desire and selfishness, and our suffering never ceases. This is why the role of people walking the Buddha Way who encounter someone who is suffering is to connect with that person using a gentle approach, under the belief that the opportunity for that person to encounter the teachings of the Buddha may still not be entirely ripe.

When encountering people who are struggling with suffering and distress, it is important for those who know that they are given the gift of life and sustained by the Buddha to engage distressed people in a way that helps them recognize the compassion of the Buddha through the problems they are facing. If you have experienced the



preciousness of the Buddha's teachings even once, you can reflect on the state of your heart in light of the teachings in every such encounter. And it will be possible for you to apply that experience in compassionate action to resolve the suffering and distress of others.

People who have personally experienced liberation from suffering can engage others so that they become aware of the compassion of the Buddha. And through this effort, those who help others realize the compassion of the Buddha unfold their own buddha nature even further. When we accept every encounter as an opportunity to bring our own buddha nature to light, we stride straight ahead on the bodhisattva way.

Revealing the buddha nature of another can be done at any time and in any kind of interaction. Whether at work or in your community, the important thing is to encourage those who have roles there to do what they do in the spirit of devotion for the benefit of others.

When I arrive at the Great Sacred Hall in the morning, I'm always greeted by that day's volunteers serving at the Hall. Among them sometimes are small children as young as kindergarten age. When I pat them on the head and say "You came to volunteer today! Do a good job!" they respond with big nods and their facial expressions transform to show they are eager to help. I believe that even this much interaction will spark an awareness within each child's heart that they are playing an important role.

In Buddhism there is the concept of "becoming a buddha through any of ten thousand good deeds," and I am certain that the experience of fulfilling a role for the Buddha from a young age surely leads people to act for the benefit of others and the world at large when they become adults.

*Bodai no me o okosashimu* (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 32–33



# Director's Column



## Contributing to Peace through “Body, Speech, and Mind”

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa

Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

**J**APAN has entered the peak of the summer season, August. As the only country in history to have been the victim of atomic bombs, Japan observes annual memorial rites and peace prayer ceremonies every year during this month.

Feelings of remorse and grief, and a yearning to offer solace to all who lost their lives in the war, still endure today, seventy-eight years after the end of the Second World War, and I believe that these sentiments will continue to be passed down forevermore.

In May of this year, Japan hosted the G7 Hiroshima Summit. At different times, the leaders of the G7 member nations, the heads of invited countries and representatives from international organizations, and special guest President Zelensky of Ukraine, lowered their heads in respect at the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims, located within the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, and visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. Media coverage of these actions served to intensify the yearning for peace in Japan.

I strongly believe that there has never been a more crucial time than right now for not only political leaders but also people of faith like us to make a vow, accompanied by action, to bring solace to the victims of war and work toward peace so that we can eradicate conflicts and wars from human civilization.

This month, I would like to consciously engage in the practice of integrating my body, speech, and mind, aiming to create a world of harmony within my daily encounters, while also encouraging my fellow companions to join me in these efforts.

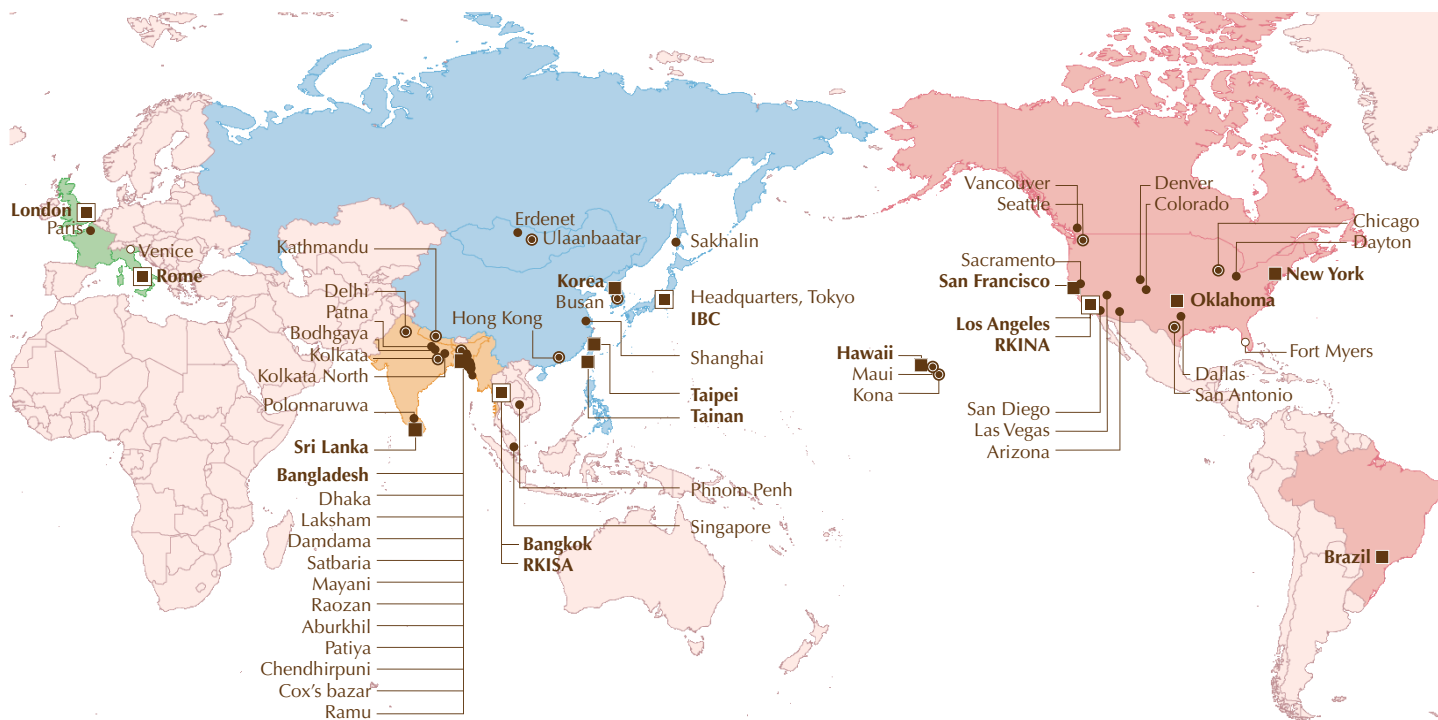


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Make Every Encounter Matter



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✉ We welcome comments on our newsletter Living the Lotus: [living.the.lotus.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp](mailto:living.the.lotus.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp)