

# Living the

# LOTUS

## Buddhism in Everyday Life

# 11

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FOUNDER'S ESSAY

## Practicing Perseverance in Raising Children

THE greatest wish of parents is that their children will be truly happy. For this reason, it is important that parents teach their children the most essential ingredient for achieving happiness. In this society, we can't survive without living life to the fullest for ourselves. However, if we don't also live for others, we are never going to find happiness. I think instilling this ideal is the point of education in the home.

This is not something that we can teach by simply saying it once or twice. Rather than being taught by precept, children observe what their parents say and do in daily life, and then choose their own way of life accordingly. In short, parents cannot train their children unless they themselves persevere and grow.

First of all, it is important to allow children to accomplish what they can. It may seem quicker for parents to do things, rather than having to carefully explain so a child can do it all on his or her own. But parental affection is patiently allowing children to experience something for themselves while parents keep a watchful eye over them. The education of our children requires an enormous capacity for patience. True education is not possible without it. A truly human way of life is learned only through patient repetition.

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Rissho Kosei-kai is a lay Buddhist organization whose holy scripture is the Threefold Lotus Sutra. It was established by Founder Nikkyo Niwano and Cofounder Myoko Naganuma in 1938. This organization is composed of ordinary men and women who have faith in the Buddha and strive to enrich their spirituality by applying his teachings to their daily lives. At both the local community and international levels, we, under the guidance of President Nichiko Niwano, are very active in promoting peace and well-being through altruistic activities and cooperation with other organizations.

The title, *Living the Lotus—Buddhism in Everyday Life*, is meant to convey our hope of striving to practice the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in daily life, to enrich and make our lives more worthwhile, like lotus flowers blooming in a muddy pond. The online edition aims to make Buddhism more practicable in the daily lives of people around the world.



## GUIDANCE BY PRESIDENT NIWANO

# Smiling Can Create Happiness

by Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

## Smiling Is One Form of Diligence

From long ago, the Japanese have said, “Good fortune comes to the cheerful gate.” This means that happiness comes to a family that is always smiling and full of laughter.

I think that a family that can always smile must be happy and, to quote Founder Nikkyo Niwano, as published in the June 2016 issue of Rissho Kosei-kai’s monthly magazine *Kosei* (“A Record of the Founder’s Dharma Talk”), when he was asked, “What is the secret of your always smiling?” he replied, “It is because I am always ‘naked.’”

When we remove our armor of self-righteousness and stand “naked,” that is, when we become completely honest, we feel comfortable. And then, no matter what the situation, we can keep on smiling. That may be one reason for Founder Niwano’s smile, which made an unforgettable impression on people, whether they were members of Rissho Kosei-kai or from outside of the organization. It became known as “the Niwano smile.”

However, Founder Niwano was a human being, just as we all are. He must sometimes have had sad or painful experiences that made him unable to smile. If my memory is correct, it was in his middle years that he became famous for his smile. In fact, when I look through the photographs of Founder Niwano collected in our family albums, there are almost none of him smiling when he was young.

When I think of the many events in our organization’s history, such as its founding, and the early beginnings of Religions for Peace in which Founder Niwano was actively involved, back then he may not have had much to smile about.

Incidentally, the late Masako Otaki, who held an important position in Rissho Kosei-kai as a board member and shouldered heavy responsibility for Religions for Peace Japan, said in an article in one of Rissho Kosei-kai’s periodicals, “Even when facing difficulties that were hard to accept, Founder Niwano was always



willing to receive them with a smile.” And another article about Founder Niwano’s smile reported, “Behind his smile was the practice of holding back sadness, anger, or regret, and redirecting them to a smile.”

For Founder Niwano, putting a smile on his face was one form of diligence, which eventually became redirected to a true smile. From a different perspective, his faith involved changing instantly a painful circumstance into the seed of a smile. Founder Niwano was showing us that therein happiness can be found.

### Smiling for Everyone’s Sake

It is said that smiling affects one’s health positively by raising the body temperature and strengthening one’s immune system. Smiling also has a harmonizing effect, allowing friendly relations with everyone around you. If you wear a sour face, people will feel unable to open up with you. But no matter how difficult the circumstances are, if you can accept things with a smile, that is the first step toward creating an area of harmony.

In his famous poem, “Ame ni mo makezu” (Undeclared by the Rain), Kenji Miyazawa (1896–1933), a poet and author of children’s literature, wrote of his hope that “Without desire, / Never angry, / And always smiling quietly— / I want to become / Someone like that.” Miyazawa also wrote, “Until the whole world becomes happy, there is no happiness for the individual.” This is based on the phrase of the Universal Transfer of Merits mentioned in the Lotus Sutra—“So that we, with all living beings, / Together accomplish the Buddha Way”—and is therefore connected to his wish that everyone should become happy.

This is why Miyazawa was always mindful of never being greedy or angry or hating other people. While he hoped for the happiness of everyone, Miyazawa probably naturally came to embody a bodhisattva-like lifestyle of “always smiling quietly.” Smiling is one form of diligence that makes you personally happy, and which at the same time is an act that stems from the wish that everyone be happy.

People who are not Risho Kosei-kai members often praise us, saying, “Members of your organization all have pleasant smiles.” That is something to be grateful for, of course, and these must be the smiles of bodhisattvas that arise from the spirit of the universal transfer of merits. We might also say that our smiles are inherited from Founder Niwano, the one hundred and tenth anniversary of whose birth we celebrate this month.

From *Kosei*, November 2016.



# Spiritual Journey

## The Two Years in Gakurin Seminary Helped Me Grow

by Salgamuwa Hewage Pashindu  
Sri Lanka Dharma Center

*This Dharma experience was delivered during the ceremony  
for Founder Niwano's anniversary at the Great Sacred Hall on March 1, 2016*

GOOD morning, everyone. I was born in the town of Galle in southern Sri Lanka, on March 24, 1989. There are five people in my family—my parents, grandmother, a younger brother, and me, the eldest son. My parents divorced when I was eight years old and my brother was five. After their divorce, my father moved away to another town by himself. Divorce is uncommon in Sri Lanka. After he left, I felt lonely and found life inconvenient and difficult in various ways. Although our financial situation was tough, my mother focused on working to support the family, and my grandmother took over the housework and raised my brother and me. Wishing to help my mother who had worked constantly, I dropped out of college despite my family's objections and started working at the age of nineteen.

A few years ago, my mother joined Rissho Kosei-kai, and she sometimes talked to me about Rissho Kosei-kai. Originally, my family believed in Theravada Buddhism, and I opposed her action, saying, "Why do you want to believe in the teaching of Rissho Kosei-kai, a Japanese Mahayana Buddhist organization?" As I had listened to her, though, I gradually became interested in Rissho Kosei-kai and began to visit the Dharma center with her. I started to participate in youth members' activities at the



*Mr. Pashindu shares his Dharma experience at the Great Sacred Hall during the ceremony for Founder Niwano's anniversary.*

Galle Hoza Center. The time I spent with them was always filled with laughter and happiness.

Later, because of work, I moved to Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, by myself, and was busy every day. The pay was low and holidays were minimal. As I was wondering whether I should quit my job, I received guidance from Rev. Yamamoto, the minister of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center. Rev. Yamamoto told me about the story of Founder Niwano, who came to Tokyo at the age of sixteen. Founder's father told him, "Work at a place with long hours, low wages, and do your utmost best." The Founder chose painstaking work. Rev. Yamamoto said, encouraging me, "Right now, you are doing the same practice as the Founder when he was young. You are doing your best working for such a busy work with little pay. Firmly tackle your immediate work." I became really happy and wanted to try harder when I heard that I was doing just what the Founder had done.

Thereafter, I received the role of Youth Leader in the Dharma center. Rev. Yamamoto gave me Dharma guidance, since I was troubled about the difficulty of gathering young members. While receiving Dharma guidance from him and doing *tedori* (visiting the members to guide them in the Buddha Way), youth members started to gather little by little through events and activities the youth group was holding. Although balancing work and the role of the youth leader was not easy, I found it very worthwhile.

At that time, Rev. Yamamoto asked me many times, "Would you like to learn at Rissho Kosei-kai's Gakurin Seminary?" I always declined his offer because I needed to support the family. However, in my heart, I had always admired those seniors who graduated from Gakurin Seminary, seeing them actively working. In addition, the Galle Hoza Center in my hometown was closed down, and members were troubled because they did not have a place to gather. Therefore, my mother said to me, "As a representative of our family, I hope you will go and study the teachings of the Buddha in Japan. Not just for our family, but to share the teachings of the Buddha with everyone in

# Spiritual Journey

Galle.” Encouraged by my mother, I took and passed the entry exam for the Gakurin Seminary International Course. I decided that I would definitely reopen the Galle Hoza Center again by practicing Dharma training and learning in Japan about how to manage the center, as well as how to disseminate the teachings of the Dharma for its members.

The Gakurin Seminary is located in Ome City, in the suburbs of Tokyo. Ome is very similar to my hometown, Galle, because of its rich natural setting, and I could easily relax there. However, I was not able to get used to the Japanese lifestyle and had no knowledge of the Japanese language, so I experienced difficulty after I entered the seminary. I was often sick and absent from school, so I was not able to catch up with my schoolwork. I had a bacterial infection called “impetigo” and had surgery on my foot, for which I had to take three weeks off from school. Whenever I was resting in my room at the dorm, I would think of the nice care my mother would give me if I had been at home, and that made me feel that it was much harder to live in Japan.

I was having such a hard time, and I had felt even more pain when I knew that my father had gotten married again. Up to that point my father had not remarried because of the opposition of my younger brother and me, even though he mentioned many times that he wanted to marry again. But he suddenly decided to marry another woman. I asked my brother to try to stop our father from getting remarried, but our father wouldn’t change his mind. The last time I was talking on the phone with my father, we ended up arguing loudly and he said, “You guys are not my children!” He threw my younger brother’s cell phone and broke it.

Since I was in Japan, I could not do anything, so I pushed my brother to talk my father out of his decision. That alienated my brother from me. I wished that my family could get back to the way things had been before my parents’ divorce, but thinking that it would never come true, I felt sad.

Furthermore, the day before my father’s wedding, my ninety-five-year-old grandmother passed away. I couldn’t accept her death because she was cheerfully joking over the phone when I had talked with her just two days before. My grandmother had always been a person who understood and supported my mother after the divorce, and her existence was also very important to my brother and me.

I believe the passing of our grandmother must have made my mother feel more sad and uneasy than me. Even so, my mother didn’t tell me about Grandmother’s passing right away because she knew it would worry me.

Our family fell apart after our grandmother’s passing

and my father’s remarriage. I stopped caring about my studies in Japan. I was suffering so much because I was worried about my mother and brother. I talked with people about what I could do to go back home, but all of them said, “It’s not good to go back now.”

Both Rev. Yamamoto and my mother said, “You don’t need to worry about anything” and “Don’t worry. Continue studying in Japan.” However, I couldn’t understand the true meaning of these words and became depressed, thinking that my family didn’t need me in such a difficult time.

I was suffering more and more, so I sought guidance from the Buddha, saying, “I can’t do this anymore. I want to go back but I can’t. What can I do to make myself like studying? What should I do to change my way of thinking so that I can stay in Japan and focus on my studies?”

While I was still feeling depressed, I had to take the Japanese Language Proficiency Test in order to enter the second year of Gakurin Seminary, but I failed. The minister and other people around me supported me so that I could move up to the second year, and I took the promotion test. I passed it and entered the second year.

After entering the second year, we began to study about Buddhism. Up until then, I only had the perspective that Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism are different. However, I was deeply impressed to know for the first time that the teachings of Buddhism, which was born in India, came to Japan via China and the Korean Peninsula, including the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

Later on, I was assigned to go to the Kofu Dharma Center for Dharma training. There were many things that I wanted to study and I was filled with hope. However, the first duty Rev. Yoshida, minister of the Kofu Dharma Center, assigned me was to tidy up the Dharma center’s storeroom.

Mr. Fujimaki, a member of the Dharma center, was also assigned to the duty together with me. He encouraged me whenever I felt like giving up. He taught me to reflect on myself when I felt like I was suffering and wanting to escape. Earlier at Gakurin Seminary, I felt confused and miserable. However, through cleaning the storeroom little by little, my mind slowly became at ease. Seeing the joyous expressions on everyone’s face after cleaning the storeroom, I felt a sense of accomplishment beyond description.

During my second Dharma training, I set up the goal of learning the management of the Dharma center and the Dharma dissemination. To support my wish to do *michibiki* (guiding nonmembers to the Dharma), members in the chapter to which I had been assigned performed morning devotional service to help me achieve my goal. Thanks to their kind support, I learned many things through *hoza*,

# Spiritual Journey

Dharma circle, and unannounced visits to nonmembers' homes to talk about the teachings. I also guided two households to the faith. It was such a wonderful experience, and one I am very grateful for.

At the end of the Dharma training, I received the duty of sharing my spiritual experience on November 1. However, I was feeling very distressed because for a couple months I had not been able to get in contact with my brother who was working at part-time job in Dubai, in the Middle East.

On October 30, on the way back from a member's funeral, the chapter leader said to me, "Let's go home in my car" and "You have been looking a little depressed recently. Something happened to you? What is bothering you most right now?" Then I told her everything about my brother.

Looking back, I had always worried about my brother because he had little social experience and was not independent. By that point, he had joined a youth gang and he couldn't stay in the same job for more than two or three months. When he said, "I want to go to Dubai," I opposed his idea and said, "I worry about your going abroad by yourself."

After listening to my thoughts, the chapter leader asked me why I was worried about my brother and why I wanted to deny my brother's wish to go to Dubai. She gave me Dharma guidance, saying, "How about thinking about your brother's feelings while performing your sutra recitation tonight?"

That night, after the sutra recitation, I was sitting in front of the altar and pondered, "Why does my brother always cause trouble and never listens to what I say?" I noticed that I had always seen him as someone who couldn't do anything.

I thought about the reason why my brother quit his favorite job at the hotel and left our mother alone in order to go to Dubai. I reached the conclusion that he wanted to protect our family on my behalf because I couldn't do anything for my mother. I realized how wonderful he had been while he had been doing his best to work part-time there. I didn't notice his thoughtfulness and denied his wish, thinking that he had acted selfishly despite my objection. I felt sorry to my brother from the bottom of my heart, and my heart was filled with gratitude to him for his consideration toward our family. That night, I fell asleep with a warm feeling, thinking about my brother.

In the middle of the night, after I had slept a few hours, my cell phone suddenly rang. It was a call from my brother. He told me that he had found a new job, although the pay was low, but he would like to do his utmost. We continued talking for hours with tears in our eyes.

The next day, I told the chapter leader about this, and

she shed tears of joy. "Such is the invisible world," she said.

On the day of my speech on my experience of the Dharma, I had a feeling of gratitude for my brother, and I was able to talk about my thoughts before the Buddha and the members of the Kofu Dharma Center, feeling refreshed and renewed. I said, "I came to the Kofu Dharma Center with the intention of bringing what I have learned here back to my country and help liberate those who need it, but I found that it was really for my own liberation.

Before, I wasn't able to understand the feelings of my family members who had been close to me. However, as I listened to those fathers who were concerned about their children during the training, I began to think, "What was in my father's mind?" My mother also told me that being alone after my brother and I left to another countries, she could somewhat understand that how lonely her husband must have felt after their divorce.

I couldn't stop blaming my father, so I did not even consider that my father might have felt lonely. I wasn't able to understand his feelings and support him. I reflected what kind of feelings he must have had about such a son. I felt really sorry about that.

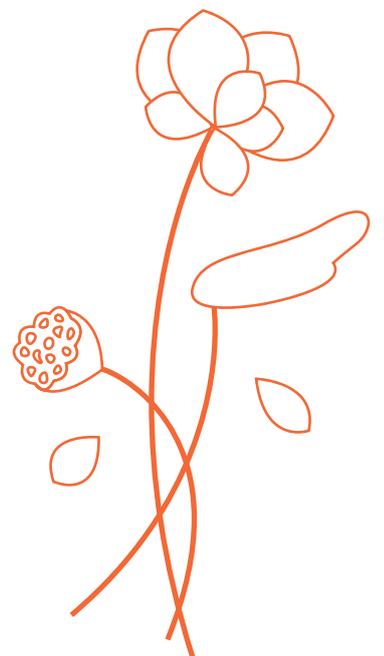
Looking back at the two years I spent in Gakurin Seminary, it was filled with hardship. However, thanks to the support from many people and the chances they've given me, I was able to come all the way here without giving up. I am very grateful to fellow classmates who have spent time together in Gakurin Seminary, my classmates who have served as an example for me, and teachers and sangha members who have supported me.

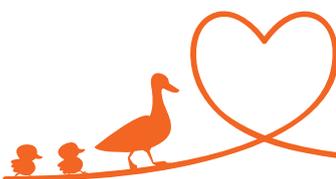
After returning to my country, I would like to devote myself to being diligent in the practice of the Way, aiming to reopen the Galle Hoza Center, which is my dream. Moreover, I will never give up in whatever situation I may find myself, and share what I have learned in Japan with many young people in my country. Everyone, thank you very much for your kind attention.



*Mr. Pashindu (bottom left) with youth members from the Sri Lanka Dharma Center.*

**Living the**  
**LOTUS**





# Child Care *lifeline*

## I am a father whose daughter dislikes him

**Q**

I am a father of a girl in the sixth grade at elementary school. Recently, I have begun to find communicating with my daughter difficult. The other day, she was watching the final episode of a serial TV drama. When I asked her how the drama was, she just said, “It was OK,” and said nothing more. Another day, I asked her what kind of competition she would be taking part in during an upcoming school field day. She gave me the curt answer, “Many kinds.” When I pressed the issue, she answered, “You can see the program for yourself; I put up on the refrigerator.” I hear that when girls become teenagers, they sometimes hate their fathers for no particular reason. When I think that she may have entered this phase, I feel sad and miserable. I wonder if such a relationship between a father and daughter is healthy.



**A**

It’s good even to get a short answer, such as “Many kinds,” from a daughter who has entered puberty. Consider the fact that some children completely ignore their parents. So when your daughter replies, “Many kinds,” it would be fine if you would say, “Well, I would like to see one of those events if I have the time.” You don’t have to be concerned as to whether she responds. When you speak to your daughter with attention and concern, your consideration will be conveyed to her as fatherly affection. When handing a notice of class observation to their parents, some children say, “You don’t have to come, but I brought the note to you anyway.” Hearing the child say, “You don’t have to come,” the parents take the child’s words literally, thinking that it’s best not to interfere in their child’s life. But as a result, the child might feel lonely, thinking that their parents aren’t concerned about them. When a child reaches puberty, it becomes clear that what he or she says, and what he or she really feels, are often two different things. Children have a desire to be recognized, but they do not want to share their innermost feelings. So, the words they express and their true feelings differ sometimes. Understanding that children sometimes have such mental characteristics, it is very important to listen to the voiceless voice of children, which speaks in their hearts. Even though your daughter has a curt attitude toward you, please keep saying, “You

are my treasure!” A girl in the sixth grade has just reached puberty, so your conversation with her may be a little unnatural. But your parental tenderness will surely permeate into your daughter, and as she grows up, she will come to rely on you again. “Even though I haven’t talked that much with my father, my father has watched over me all the time.” “My father was strict with me, but he always showed me his parental love.” Children who think of their parents in this way will not make light of their fathers when they go out with men or decide to marry them. The relationship between a father and his daughter is really revealing.

### Point

Don’t be concerned about every single response from your daughter.



Even if your daughter considers you annoying, it is important to keep telling her that you have concern for her. Feeling relieved at the fact that she is loved by her parents will lead to the confidence of living when she grows up.

(Answers provided by the Tokyo Research Institute for Family Education)

The Tokyo Research Institute for Family Education cooperates with us in producing this regular column. The institute believes that if parents change their thinking and behavior for the better, so will their children. The institute offers lectures and seminars for parents in various areas of Japan and in other countries, as well as giving personal advice to parents on childrearing. For decades, the institute’s programs have helped parents with childrearing problems grow spiritually with their children to create harmonious, happy homes.

## Seeing Things in a Right Way

The warm way you treasure your interactions with your daughter shows what a gentle and warmhearted father you are.

When seen from a father's perspective, your daughter's attitude feels rather dismissive, and that has left you feeling a little lonely.

Buddhism teaches us the importance of seeing things in the right way. This is called "right view," the first step of the Eightfold Path, which is one of the fundamental Buddhist teachings.

"Right view" means seeing a thing or a person in an appropriate way; that is, a way of seeing that is neither self-centered nor one-sided and prejudiced.

Your daughter's attitude may seem rather dismissive to you when you see it from a father's perspective, but how about seeing the situation from your daughter's standpoint?

Her father spoke to her while she was watching the final episode of a serial TV drama. At the time, she may have thought, "I wish Father hadn't chosen this moment to talk to me. It's bad timing."

At the same time, when her father asks her a question, and expects too much in response, a sense of spiritual distance may arise between the two of you. Therefore, it is vital for you to communicate your own feelings to her, always considering your daughter's complicated emotions as she goes through puberty, and it is sometimes necessary to watch over and pray for her while keeping her at some distance.

People in different positions have different viewpoints. Having "right view" means not seeing things from our own self-centered viewpoint but seeing things from others' viewpoint.

If you try to see things from your daughter's viewpoint, you may find some fresh discoveries. Then, the spiritual distance you are now feeling between you and your daughter will gradually glow smaller.

(Editorial Supervision by Department of Dharma Education & Human Resources Development, Rissho Kosei-kai)



Please give us your comments!



We welcome comments on our e-newsletter *Living the Lotus*.

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# Director's Column

## Embodying the Teaching in Ourselves through Practice

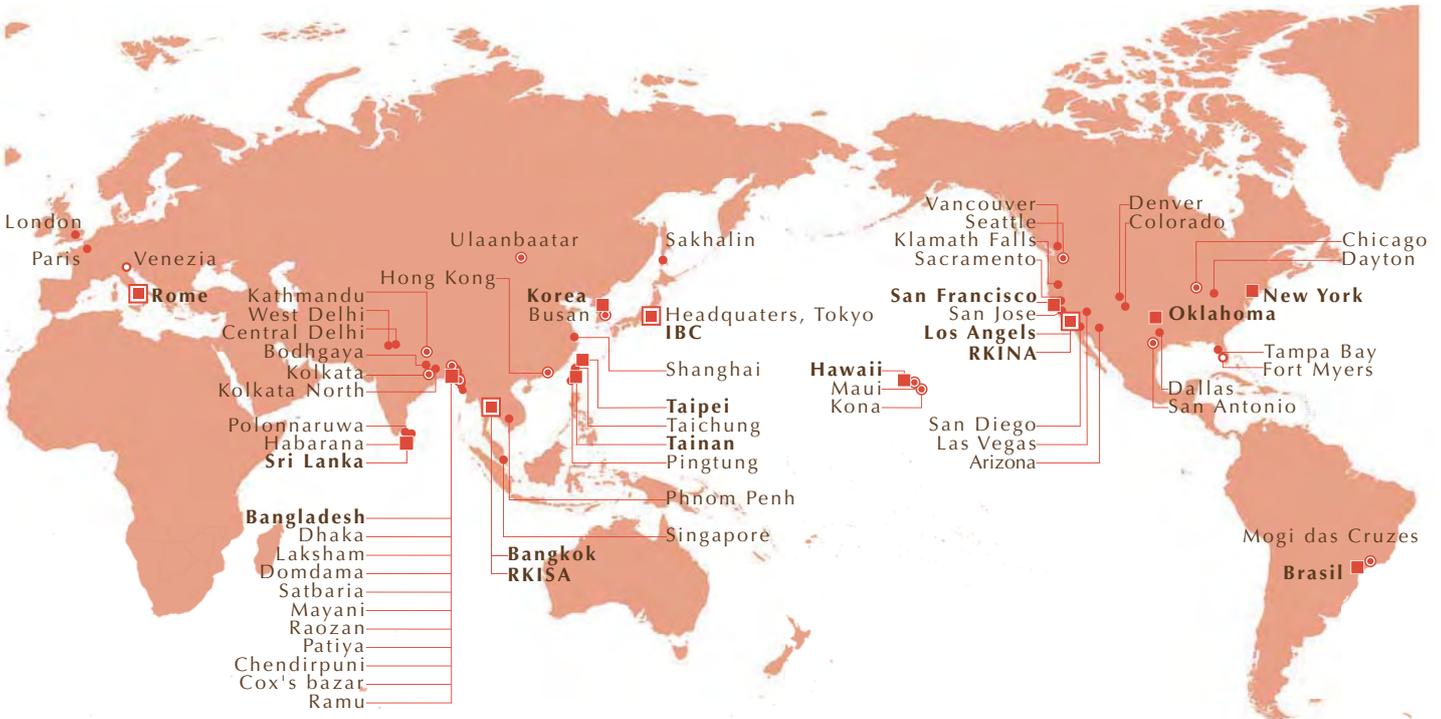
AT Rissho Kosei-kai of Taipei, a special ceremony is held on the 25th of each month to commemorate Kannon Bodhisattva. Actually it was on the 25th that I last visited the Taipei Dharma Center, and as the practice of *tedori* (helping to enhance members' connection with the Dharma), members visited the homes of senior members.

When members came back to the Dharma center from *tedori*, they were all excited, saying joyfully, "I was glad as I was able to see her after so many months," "She welcomed us even though we did not have an appointment," and "It was amazing that we found a just enough space to park our car right in front of his home, even though the street was all filled with parked cars."

Seeing the members' radiance after the *tedori* practice, I learned the importance of embodying the teaching in ourselves through practicing, rather than just studying. As written in the Lotus Sutra, "the Buddha-tathagatas teach only bodhisattvas," members of the Taipei Dharma Center were able to embrace the profound mind of Kannon Bodhisattva.

The teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha is alive in the hearts and minds of Rissho Kosei-kai members in the world. On the occasion of the 110th anniversary of Founder Niwano's birthday this month, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to him, who has guided all of us to the teaching of Shakyamuni.

REV. SHOKO MIZUTANI  
Director of Rissho Kosei-kai International



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