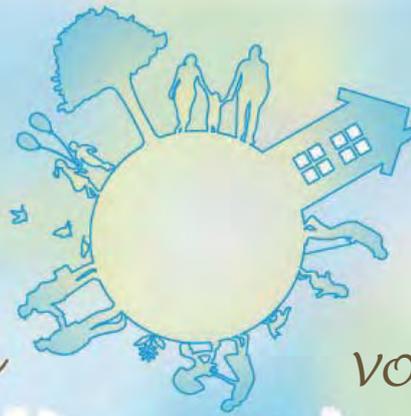


# Living the LOTUS

*Buddhism in Everyday Life*



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*Founder's Essay*

## The Heart That Is Willing to Wait

I THINK the most important thing in helping others grow is having a heart that is willing to wait for them. It's not such a simple thing to correct one's faults and reform bad habits. Even when a boss at a company gives many warnings to employees or cautions them to never repeat a certain kind of mistake, they aren't always able to change their ways all at once.

We often see mothers reprimanding their children, chiding them by saying things like, "You told me you understood, didn't you?" or "If I keep telling you, will you get it?" But there is all the difference in the world between understanding something with your head and actually being able to do it.

For instance, consider something as simple as moving the things from a shelf on your right to one on your left. It's not so easy to rid oneself of that long-accustomed habit of reaching to the right. It's something that changes little by little as we blunder repeatedly.

Unless we watch over people's progress with the magnanimity and kindness to wait for them, they will never grow. Even if you yourself have the look of the enlightened, I'd like you to recall how many people watched over and waited for you until you got that way.

Nikkyo Niwano, *Kaiso zuikan* 9 (Kosei Publishing, 1997), pp. 218–19

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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.

## Living Free and Unhindered

Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



### The True Meaning of Being Free and Unhindered

Many people think that if they could live free and unhindered lives, they would be very happy. Seen from a different perspective, these people are expressing how much restriction and dissatisfaction we feel in our daily lives.

In a sense, though, this dissatisfaction is natural. We think of freedom as being able to do as we wish, and when we run into a reality that does not meet our expectations, we become dissatisfied, displeased, and irritated. We suffer, which in turn makes us think that we are being hindered. One might think that by trying to be free we are actually bringing hindrance upon ourselves, but actually, the moment when we feel hindered is an opportunity to make our lifestyle into one that reflects the true meaning of being free and unhindered.

In Buddhism, the total disappearance of attachments to desire and the mind's insistence on doing as it pleases is said to be “enjoyment”—the state of mind that has no attachments to anything and is considered to be free and unhindered. This is the realm of feeling relaxed and at ease, without cares or sorrow.

The Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World is sometimes called Kanjizai Bosatsu (Bodhisattva Unhindered Regarder) in Japan, and the word “unhindered” in this version of her name signifies her power and action to liberate suffering people at will when she hears them cry out for her. In other words, the true meaning of being free and unhindered is found in a lifestyle of being considerate of others while aiming to improve yourself together with other people.

### This Threefold World Is Your Domain

This passage appears in chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra, “A Parable”: “I am a father to these living beings. I must pluck them out of such suffering and hardship and give them the joy of the immeasurable, boundless Buddha wisdom so that they may enjoy it.” This passage means that, to we living beings (who often think we are hindered and hope to avoid suffering) the Buddha gives the “joy of wisdom”—that is, he conveys to us a way of living that is truly free and unhindered. But what exactly is this joy of wisdom?





To give you an example, imagine that right now, before your very eyes, there are two donuts. They have been given to you. However, there are three other people around you who are just as hungry as you are.

To quote from the scripture, “All of the causes of suffering / Are rooted in greed and desire.” The feeling of wanting to eat the donuts yourself (greed), as well as the feelings of resentment and jealousy (hatred) from those who did not receive them are both forms of suffering. Therefore, you might say that asking the Buddha to present you all with a sufficient amount of donuts is the joy of wisdom. This is not the case, however, as the joy of wisdom actually means becoming capable of accepting the suffering of insufficiency as joy and happiness that leads to the improvement of yourself and others.

Returning to the idea of freedom, we could say that we are given the freedom to positively accept the difficult things that happen. Even when we are suffering, we can transform that suffering into happiness by fully accepting it, savoring a small happiness before our eyes, and sharing our joy with other people. I think this is a way of life that is truly free and unhindered.

“A Parable” also contains these lines of verse: “Now this threefold world / Is all my domain,” meaning, “This world and the universe are mine.” We might not presume to think such things about ourselves, but each and every one of us has received a unique, precious life, as one part of nature, in harmony with everything. In other words, the entire universe is one with you; it is entirely yours. These lines of verse are a message from the Buddha, who is assuring us that as long as we understand this truth, we will always be able to take action full of wisdom and compassion—and this is what the Buddha wants us to do.

In keeping with this idea, there is one thing I would like to ask. What will you do with the two donuts mentioned earlier?

From *Kosei*, July 2019





## The Two Years at Hoju Vocational College That Changed My Life



Ms. Kayo Nakakawaji  
Hoju Vocational College

*This Dharma Journey talk was presented in the Great Sacred Hall on March 1, 2019, during the ceremony for the first day of the month (Uposatha Day).*

GOOD morning, everyone. Hoju Vocational College offers classes on humane education (the study of nurturing compassion and respect for living beings) based on the spirit of Buddhism. I decided to enroll in the college because I wanted to become capable of accepting everything positively by changing my perspective.

All Hoju students live in the college dormitory, and I was often bothered by my classmates' words and actions there. I was not happy with myself because I got upset so easily. Through my classes, I became capable of realizing that we all grew up in different environments and have different ways of thinking. I also realized that I was easily upset by others' behaviors because I looked at things according to my own criteria. After that, I began to be able to reflect on my own behavior, but there were things I still couldn't accept no matter how hard I tried. I reacted poorly to unfavorable situations because I was not tolerant enough and I always wanted others to do what I wanted them to do.

Hoju Vocational College has an annual program for students that offers practical training in Dharma dissemination at a local Dharma center. In January, I visited the Suzuka Dharma Center in Mie Prefecture for the training. In the beginning I was eager to put into practice what I had learned in my humane education classes, but my enthusiasm faded as soon as I met the chapter leader who would be my mentor. She appeared to be a very strict person, and I was nervous around her. She was skillful in sharing the Buddha's teachings with other members, but her straightforward manner made me nervous. I thought I would someday become a target of her harsh guidance. Since I could not talk to her candidly about what was on my mind, my self-confidence withered rapidly.

It was around this time that a teacher from the college

visited the Dharma center to check on the students' progress. I asked this teacher how my classmates were doing and learned that some had already begun the kinds of training I wanted to practice. I was frustrated, and I wondered what I had been doing up until this point.

With mixed feelings, I gave a presentation about Hoju Vocational College to the members of the Dharma center, along with my teacher. As I was reciting the aims of the college, a sense of pride at being a Hoju student—which I was beginning to lose—welled up in me. I consulted with my teacher and decided on "Revealing the Buddha-Nature in Myself and Others" as the theme of my Dharma dissemination training.

After the talk with my teacher, I challenged myself to get to know the chapter leader whom I had thought scary. I asked how she came to know Rissho Kosei-kai, and while hearing about her past experiences and her encounter with Rissho Kosei-kai's teachings, I felt my heart opening up toward her. I discovered that she was thinking about me a lot, which also warmed my heart. My impression of the chapter leader changed completely as soon as my mindset changed. It was a moving experience for me.



*Ms. Nakakawaji delivers her Dharma Journey talk at the Great Sacred Hall.*

Beginning the next day, my attitude toward attending *hoza* sessions also changed. I started trying to draw close to the feelings of the people who were suffering and hoped they would achieve happiness soon. While consciously continuing the practice of revering the buddha-nature in others, I began to be able to see everyone with respect.

When I was talking to a certain member one day, words of appreciation for her kindness to others came to my mouth effortlessly. She smiled brightly and thanked me, saying that my words had removed her worry and that she felt her heart lighten. I was gladdened by her words, and I felt tears welling up. This experience became my life's treasure.

During another *hoza* session, a member said, "We were trying to change the situation we were in, but it didn't work. We had to change ourselves first." These words stuck with me, as I knew how hard it was to change oneself. It takes a lot of effort. But I was convinced then that my circumstances would change if I changed, and that to reflect on myself was indispensable in order to bring about that change.

The Dharma dissemination training at Suzuka Dharma Center became an opportunity for me to make a major decision. When I was small, my parents fought daily. When my father got drunk and argued with my mother, he would become a different person who took his anger out on the things around him. My mother had a strong personality, so she did not give an inch. My elder brother and I would try to stop the quarrels, crying. One day, my mother decided to leave home in order to keep us away from our father. While our father was out one day, she packed up, took my brother and me, and moved out of the house. Our parents then divorced.

After the divorce, my father often sent us letters telling us that he wanted to see my brother and me, and he even began coming to our school to visit us. I began to want to stay away from our wayward father. But my father, who became an alcoholic after the divorce, did not care about my feelings and kept showing up at school. Finally, when I was in eleventh grade, my father came to see me at school and I told him to leave at once and never come back. Though I threw such harsh words at him, I began to feel sorry for him. He would not be

able to see his children anymore, and he might die alone. I thought if I didn't make an effort to reconcile with him, I would definitely regret it someday. Yet since I believed my mother would disapprove of this, I was indecisive and until this year I have kept my feelings to myself.

During the Dharma dissemination training, I consulted the chapter leader about my father, which prompted me to do what had been on my mind for so long: I took a chance and called my mother, telling her my desire to meet my father. My mother seemed a little anxious about it, but she has allowed me to meet him later this month, during spring break. She told me the reason that my father began to drink and vent his anger, and I learned for the first time how deeply he was suffering. I felt remorse for what I had said to him, and for pushing him out of my life instead of showing him even the slightest appreciation for his parental love.

Later, I learned that the day I consulted the chapter leader about my father, he had called the college to ask if he could visit me at school. Now I look forward to seeing my father soon, and when I meet him I hope I can express how I care for him.

My encounter with the Lotus Sutra enabled me to learn a new way of looking at things. I have gradually become able to believe that everything that comes my way is a necessary lesson in life. I have realized the importance of revering the buddha-nature in others and become capable of wishing all people happiness. I hope to make use of what I learned at Hoju Vocational College and grow into an individual who can contribute to society.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.



*Farewell party for Ms. Nakakawaji with the chapter members during her practical training in Dharma dissemination.*

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

## The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma Chapter 9

### The Assurance Given to Those Trained and Still in Training



After the five hundred disciples received assurance that they would attain buddhahood, Rahula (Shakyamuni's only son) and Ananda (his cousin), both of whom were numbered among the ten great disciples, felt left out and began to wonder why they should not also be directly designated. When they went before the Buddha and asked to be included, the Buddha gave them assurance individually while also assuring buddhahood for a great number of those trained and still in training. The phrase "trained" refers to the stage at which one has completed one's study, while "still in training" refers to the stages on the path of pursuing religious learning.

This seems as if it is the only content of this short chapter, but there are two important lessons to be learned from this simple material.

#### Once We Realize Our Own Buddha-Nature, We Can Become Buddhas

The first lesson lies in the assurance given to those who were still in training—those practitioners who were under guidance and learning by doing. Though it may seem strange that realizing one's buddha-nature is all that's needed to become a buddha, careful reflection makes it plain that there is nothing strange at all. Since all people are equally endowed with buddha-nature, once someone has clearly realized his or her buddha-nature, that person is able to become a buddha.

#### It Is Difficult to Teach and Transform Those Closest to Us

The second lesson involves the question of why assurance for Rahula and Ananda was deferred and then given along with the assurance for the *shravakas* who were still engaged in study.

Here, we need to try to see into the thinking of

Shakyamuni. Rahula was his son, and Ananda was his cousin. Both were closest to Shakyamuni, a fact that in itself may have been a hindrance to their practice. Shakyamuni may have purposely delayed assuring them in order to make this point clear to all.

In the case of Rahula, however great a figure his father is and however much he is revered by outsiders, he is first and foremost a father, and Rahula cannot see him in the same light as that in which outsiders view him. It is also quite possible that the child will tend to assume that their parent will always love them and possibly give them preferential treatment.

In the case of Ananda, for twenty years or more, he had always been by the master's side, waiting on him personally by preparing his meals and, during his bath, rubbing his back and pouring water over him. So it becomes difficult for him to distinguish the greatness of Shakyamuni the Buddha from Shakyamuni the man. It would have been only natural for Ananda to have difficulty trusting the Buddha in the same, absolute, way as the other disciples.





Perhaps it is most difficult to teach those most closely related to us, such as a husband, wife, child, or parent. We cannot instruct them through verbal persuasion alone; we must show them a living Buddhism within the course of daily life and influence them by our actual behavior. We cannot influence our families or fellow workers if our actions, though occasionally noble, tend to be selfish or unbecoming and do not provide a constant good example.

Though Buddhist traditions relate that Rahula and Ananda gained enlightenment later than the other great disciples, they would have become buddhas before the five hundred disciples of the previous chapter. The fact that Shakyamuni discussed their buddhahood after assuring the other great disciples may be the result of his deep concern about the problems inherent in being related to them.

### Original Vow

Another important lesson is taught in this chapter, indicated by the words of Shakyamuni, “Such was his original vow,” which he said to the eight thousand novice bodhisattvas while giving the assurance of buddhahood to Ananda.

This “original vow” is the oath taken by buddhas and bodhisattvas in their former lives to bring all living beings to liberation. It is said that Shakyamuni made a vow consisting of five hundred items, Amitabha Buddha made one containing forty-eight items, and the Buddha Medicine Master made one consisting of twelve items.

Although the eight thousand novice bodhisattvas had lost all memory of their own vow since their rebirth into this world, they had made a vow in a former life to instruct all people and bring them to perfection. It was by hearing the discourse of the Lotus Sutra that they recalled and renewed their original vow. It was then that they finally received the assurance of buddhahood.

The same can be applied to us. The true bodhisattva or Dharma teacher is none other than the person who has gone back to this original vow.



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. 94–98).

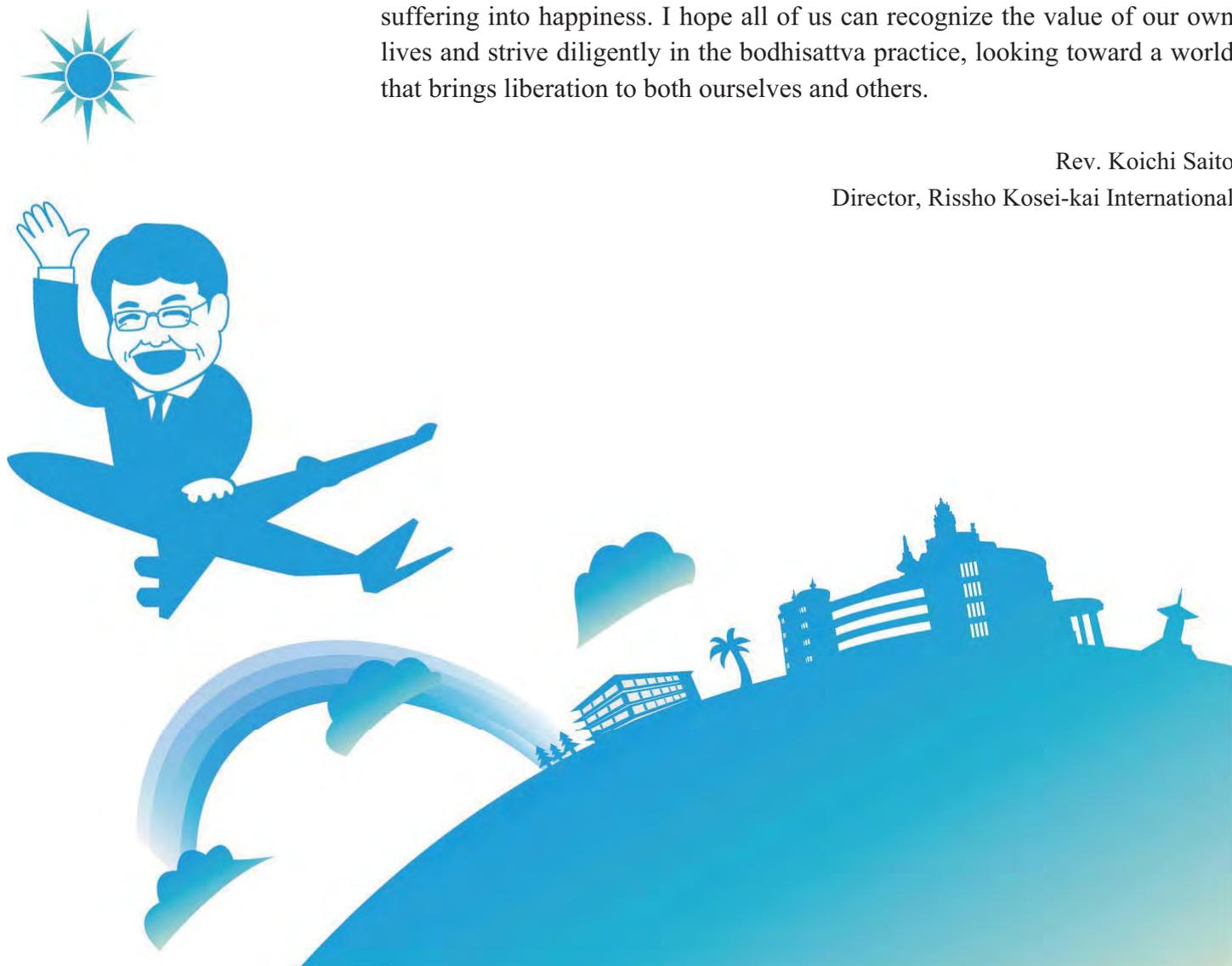
## Looking Toward a World That Brings Liberation to Ourselves and Others

THIS month, Rissho Kosei-kai celebrates the sixtieth anniversary of Dharma dissemination in the United States. This marks the start of a new era in the organization's international dissemination. United in one heart with all sangha members around the world, I hope we will strive toward further dissemination of the Dharma.

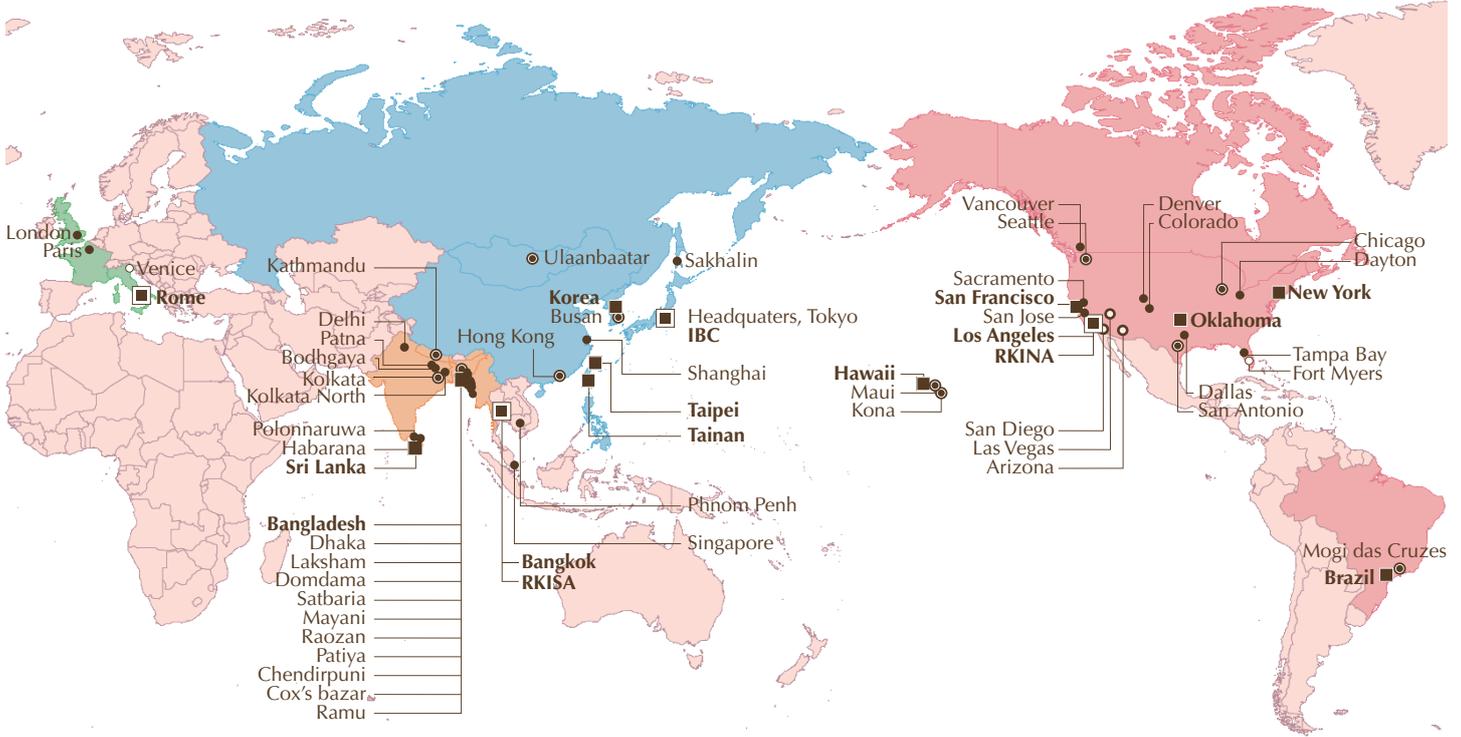
This month's "Spiritual Journey" features a Dharma Journey talk by Ms. Kayo Nakagawaji, who had been troubled by her relationship with her father. When she changed her way of looking at things and accepted everything as a necessary lesson for her—and when she became able to see the buddha-nature in others—she began to understand the sorrows of her father and hope to get closer to him. With newfound gratitude for her father, she decided to meet him once again, after her Dharma Journey talk. When I heard that she now loves her father wholeheartedly, my heart warmed.

In his message for this month, President Nichiko Niwano articulates that being truly free and unhindered comes from a way of life that transforms suffering into happiness. I hope all of us can recognize the value of our own lives and strive diligently in the bodhisattva practice, looking toward a world that brings liberation to both ourselves and others.

Rev. Koichi Saito  
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International



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**Chendirpuni Hoza**

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