

Living the

LOTUS

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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FOUNDER'S ESSAY

Impassion Yourself

IN chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra, “Teachers of the Dharma,” the Buddha Shakyamuni promises, “If there is anyone who hears even a single verse or a single phrase of the Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra, and responds in joy for even a single moment, I assure that one also of Supreme Awakening.”

Faith is an amazing thing. A person who learns just the tiniest bit of the Buddha’s teaching but responds with words of gratitude can receive meritorious blessings one after another.

However, a person who quibbles over this or that point just doesn’t get any merit from the teaching, even if the person has seemingly learned every detail by heart. If you want to know why this happens, it’s because people who are interested in the Buddha’s

teaching only as a theory are not deeply moved by it, and this changes the way they immerse themselves in it.

People who are inspired by even a single passage of the teaching will devote themselves to practicing it with passion, and they can also impassion the people around them. Everyone in their vicinity is replete with merit and overwhelmed with gratitude.

When people study the Dharma, whether they experience a moment’s inspiration through an open and sincere heart, or engage in an intellectual exercise and neglect the practice of the teaching, makes all the difference in the world.

From *Kaisozuikan* 9 (Kosei Publishing Co.), pp. 56–57

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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.

PRESIDENT'S GUIDANCE

Giving Recognition and Praise to Others

by Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



Praising Life

We usually praise people for their outstanding qualities. But how do we measure these “outstanding” qualities?

Ordinarily, when we give people recognition and praise them as outstanding, we are referring to their strong points such as passing difficult examinations, being a fast worker, displaying good personal characteristics, or excelling at some sport.

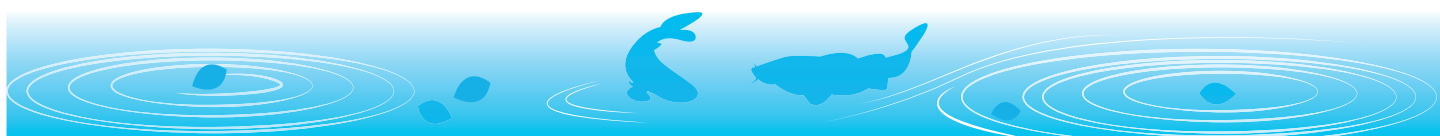
Yet, Shakyamuni praised Devadatta, the man who tried to take his life, calling him “my good friend.” And believing that Angulimala, a man who was feared by people as a bloodthirsty murderer, could be transformed spiritually through religious discipline, Shakyamuni accepted him as his disciple.

Although Shakyamuni’s way of seeing things may differ from today’s social norms, those accounts provide important insights into giving people recognition and praising them.

Generally speaking, to praise means “being deeply impressed and expressing admiration.” From that perspective, it does not seem possible to praise someone who has tried to kill you. On the other hand, to praise in Buddhist teaching is to “praise the virtues of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.” In light of this, that Shakyamuni did not fail to praise a man who had committed such evil deeds could only mean that he saw in that person the shining virtues of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

In evaluating and judging people, we cannot ignore their deeds, their words, and their character. However, if we become obsessed with such thinking, we are apt to forget the important perspective of the buddha-nature, the very thing worthy of our praise unconditionally. For us students of the Buddha Dharma, giving people recognition and praise is actually giving praise to the life we see in others, isn’t it?

In reality, though, we rarely notice this deeper meaning. Even so, for instance, when parents look at their children, or when supervisors evaluate staff members, or even when friends are doing something together, while always maintaining an attitude of looking for the outstanding qualities in others, they should never forget that all of us share the same life that is intrinsically endowed with the virtues of the buddhas and the bodhisattvas.



Know-how or Speaking Well Is Not Required

Regarding praise or admiration, particularly as a technique, much is being made of this recently. Indeed, personnel and childrearing manuals in Japan are full of the positive effects of praise. Many of them quote a phrase of the Edo era monk Jiun (1718–1805) as a wise saying supporting the positive effects of praise: “Unless you show them what to do, let them hear how to do it, let them try, and give them praise for their effort, people cannot grow.” However, a close reading of his words shows that the important point is that those doing the teaching and those being taught continue to develop together.

Praising others is opening your heart to them. We are told that it is important to praise others, but a stubborn person usually cannot manage even a few words of commendation. The feeling of sincerely giving recognition and praise to others leads to opening up of each other and building harmonious relationships. In this sense, giving recognition and praise is not actually done only for the sake of others, as it could be called one of the practices of refining one's own self.

I think it must have been in 1965. Back then, when I was facing some difficult problems, I undertook fasting for the first time. I had just finished the eight days of fasting and gradually increased my meals at the fasting practice hall, and had returned home. I got into the bath, when suddenly my father, Founder Niwano, also came into the room. “Let me wash your back,” he said, and while he washed the back of his son, whose body had lost much weight, he said, seemingly without any particular meaning of praise, “The skin on your back has become very smooth.”

It was not unusual in Japan for father and son to spend time together in the bath, but for us, it was a rare event. I feel that from this experience, I came to understand, even a little, what is important in giving recognition and praise to others. It is not know-how or words well spoken, but ultimately can be summed up as respecting the sanctity of your own and others' lives and hoping from the bottom of your heart that the other person will continue to grow and develop.

From *Kosei*, July 2017



The Buddha Living in My Heart

by Ms. Karande Kankanamge Malinee Alwis
Sri Lanka Dharma Center

This Dharma Sharing (Spiritual Journey) by Ms. Malinee Alwis was presented at the ceremony for the First Day of the Month and the Uposatha Day held at the Great Sacred Hall on November 1st, 2016.

GOOD morning, everyone. I'm very pleased to meet you here today. My name is Malinee Alwis from Sri Lanka which is an island located in the southern direction of India.

I have been married for 31 years, and my husband tenderly loves his family and has continued to diligently work for the family with his entire effort. He is a tremendously wonderful husband to support us in this way. My 29-year-old son got married this year fortunately enough, all thanks to you. My daughter is now 27 years old. There are five members living together in my family; my husband, son, daughter in law (my son's wife), daughter, and me, along with a pet dog. In the Rissho Kosei-kai Sri Lanka Dharma Center, I have been given the role of a family *hoza* (Dharma Circle) leader at my district as well as being put in charge of the promotion group for Family Education. I am also one of the board members at the Rissho Kosei Dhamma Foundation (= Sri Lanka Dharma Center), which is registered by the government of Sri Lanka.

When Rev. Yoshiaki Yamamoto was inaugurated as minister of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center in 2010, he

told us Sri Lankan members that President Nichiko Niwano had continually preached to us for as long as 20 years (1998-2017) that "the Buddha is absolute (truth)", and that "the life of the Buddha is abiding within every one of us" with regard to the theme, "Cultivating the fields in the heart and mind of each and every person."

As I was born and grew up under the parents who were faithful Theravada Buddhists in Sri Lanka, a buddha meant the most respectful and supreme Lord Buddha. Therefore, it was very difficult at the beginning to believe that the precious life of the highly respected Buddha is present within me. Having deepened my faith little by little, however, I'm genuinely practicing the teachings of the Dharma.

I became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai 20 years ago in 1996. At that time I happened to be invited by Mr. Gamini Chandrasekara, my husband's friend, who said to me, "Won't you pay a visit to Japanese Buddhist organization called Rissho Kosei-kai for once?" I was puzzled at first as to what I should do, knowing that Rissho Kosei-kai is an organization that had no professional Buddhist monks nor priests at all, but I couldn't refuse his invitation due to his being my husband's old friend.

When I visited the Sri Lanka Dharma Center for the first time, however, I was deeply touched and attracted to members' attitude of mutual reverence in praying for each other in a warmhearted atmosphere. I was also fascinated by their grateful mindsets and their thankfulness for their parents, ancestors, and other people around them. In Sri Lanka, we have national holidays on the full-moon day called *poya* day every month, and then, as any lay Buddhist followers are supposed to do, we pay a courteous visit and worship at their temples on that day. Rissho Kosei-kai's Dharma Center holds a ceremony on that *poya* day, too, so, I began to attend their ritual gatherings there.

A few years later, thanks to the compassionate



Mrs. Alwis delivers her Dharma experience in the Great Sacred Hall.

arrangement of Rev. Teruo Saito, former director of South Asia Division, some lecturers from Tokyo Research Institute for Family Education were invited to Sri Lanka, and the Family Education Symposium in public has begun to be continually held here. Through participations in the public symposia, I realized that I had raised my children just as I wanted to at my own discretion, and this awakening prompted me to deeply reflect upon myself. In the meanwhile, I have recognized that Family Education is simply none other than the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, which preaches that “We should revere the Buddha within other people.” At the same time, I understand that Family Education is one of the instrumental measures to convey the teaching of the Lotus Sutra to the general public. At present, I have been striving my best along with other members in an effort to invite all the mothers throughout Sri Lanka, wishing that all of them could listen and learn the Family Education at future public symposia.

Since the year of 2015, the Sri Lanka Dharma Center has started to hold a family *hoza* session at members’ homes in each district of Sri Lanka. Any members who have received and enshrined the *gohonzon*, (the focus of devotion) at the local bestowal ceremony of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center can apply for the role of a family *hoza* leader in the local community. At a family *hoza* session, the family’s relatives, friends, and neighbors gather together to learn and share the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai. The theme of this family *hoza* includes “Let us revere the Buddha within every family member one by one.” I also applied for the role of a family *hoza* leader.

While I was practicing *tedori* (guiding people in the Way), meeting my relatives, neighbors, friends, and acquaintances at my district, to invite them to come to a family *hoza*, I encountered a woman, whom I have known for nearly 30 years. She had happily lived with her husband and three sons, but one year later after her third son was born, her husband passed away in a motorbike accident. Five months after that accident, her real father died due to a sudden illness. Since she had no

brothers and sisters, she had to take care of her remaining three sons - a 15-year-old, a 9-year-old, and a 1-year-old - as well as her old, weak mother by herself alone.

As she had been just a house wife, she had no means to gain income at all. In the meantime confronting the successive deaths of her closest family members, she was afraid that her beloved sons’ lives might be taken away next. Therefore she started fearing that her current living house built by her father must have led to misfortune or some kind of evil, and which made her feel uneasy. By the same token, looking after her weak mother must have placed a greater weight on her shoulders.

At last she moved to a small rented house from her owned house due to the economic difficulties, and released it to another family. But her close relatives harshly blamed and condemned her, bringing up such points as why she didn’t treasure her real mother, why she had dared to move to a narrow rented house, and so forth. She has been apparently suffering from such harsh words told by them so often. She came along to talk with me and consult with me about her problem, because she hadn’t been able to tell her troubles and hardship to anyone else up to that time. When I listened to what she wanted to say, I found that her relatives just gave their complaints at her and never appreciated her at all even though she has made her best efforts in caring for her mother, and in fact, she had done as much as possible. She continued to tell me about her angry feeling toward her relatives who kept on unilaterally blaming and complaining at her, in spite of the fact that the relatives visited her house only once a while, and never offered any helping hands for her at all.

I took her to Rev. Yoshiaki Yamamoto, minister of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center to receive his Dharma guidance together. The minister said to her, “I can truly perceive your compassionate kindness on how you love and treasure your mother with all your heart, and want to take care of her warmheartedly. Please affectionately do whatever you would like to do for your mother

Spiritual Journey

according to what you honestly feel in your heart, showing your great appreciation to her who gave a birth to you. You also should be grateful and thankful for those relatives who are worried about you and pay a visit to your house with concern.” Rev. Yamamoto guided me in this way: “No matter what kind of hard time you will have, let us practice the earnest faith in the Buddha together. So, Malinee-san, please continue to practice *tedori* for her, firmly believing the Buddha without giving up, until you can perceive the feeling that her inner Buddha is just starting to shine brilliantly.”

Profoundly trusting the minister’s guidance, I have continued the practice of wholeheartedly revering the Buddha within her. Then, to my surprise, she began to put the teachings into practice, just as Rev. Yamamoto told her to do so. I was totally surprised to know this fact, and simultaneously I felt that her warmhearted considerations in thinking much of her mother signified the manifestation of the Buddha in her mind. I also felt about her own strong, firm faith. After that, the *gohonzon* bestowed at the Sri Lanka Dharma Center was enshrined at her house, and she gradually started to recite the sutra in the morning and evening in front of the Buddha at home by herself.

Wondrously enough, after a while, there happened to appear one person who wanted to buy the house she owned, although a mysterious rumor was going around about the dreadful house where family members died one after another, and so selling the house had actually been difficult. This incident was a remarkable phenomenon as if one light was shining for her. Thanks to the arrangement for the sale of her house, she and her family didn’t face any more economical hardship in their everyday life.

After that, she received a marvelous opportunity that her 17-year-old second son was recommended by his school to study in China. Soon after she sent off her second son leaving for China, her mother who had been suffering from her illness for a long time passed away for travelling at the endless journey. The eldest son, who

was working in Sri Lanka to support his family on behalf of his deceased father, especially for mother who continued to look after his grandmother and for his youngest brother, who still was just a little kid, could obtain an opportunity to receive the scholarship and went to China to study, too, in October. At present it seems difficult for two sons to send her money for living expense as they have to study, but they manage to lead independent life for an effort by themselves by working a part-time job. I wholeheartedly pray that both of her sons, after they finish studying in China, will be able to serve actively and successfully in Sri Lankan society as great human resources, utilizing these three languages of Chinese, English, and Sinhalese in the future. As the minister taught me before, I was able to learn the profound truth, in which revering and worshiping the Buddha will certainly make us lead and link to our own liberation, being free from our suffering mind through the precious experience and interactive connection with her.

This is the commemorative year of 20th anniversary for my family since we were guided to Rissho Kosei-kai in 1996. I was extremely impressed beyond my words when I heard by Rev. Yamamoto that I would be given an incredible opportunity and honor to present my Dharma Sharing on behalf of the Sri Lankan members on the stage of the Great Sacred Hall on November 1st. The reason why I was very grateful for this role was because through my presentation of this spiritual journey, I thought I could express my words of gratitude and appreciation that our Founder and President Niwano have enthusiastically preached the precious Dharma for each one of us with their compassionate hearts, and that I’ve received a mountain of warmhearted considerations from many Japanese members as well.

Unfortunately, however, around 7:30 pm on August 23, when I was riding in my son’s car, all of sudden, the car was crashed on the frontage road of express highway and overturned. I was in the rear seat and wounded seriously cracking my bones of lower back

and top of the thighbones with my hip joint. It was a sudden accident as I was returning back to my house from a certain hospital where, for the purpose of transferring merit to my deceased father, I donated dinner meals cooked by me along with lots of my family members and relatives in collaboration for those 318 patients in the hospital who are suffering from various kinds of cancers.

My son, who was driving his car, must have been exhausted and had dozed off at the wheel at that moment. Although his car was wrecked off, however, my son driving the car and his wife, who was taking on the front passenger's seat, were entirely safe and sound without any scratches at all. My husband said to me afterward, "The police officer of the express highway told me that this was the first time he has seen a survivor at the same site of this accident spot." It was nothing but the Buddha's protection and blessing for sure. One of non-member relatives said, to my astonishment, "Malinee, it's because you have been praying and practicing Rissho Kosei-kai's faithful activities hard every day, that you only sustained that level of injury, isn't it?"

Nevertheless, just only my son felt like complaining the accident, saying to me, "Why has only my mother suffered those serious injuries, despite how devoted she has been herself to the practices of Rissho Kosei-kai?" However, if this kind of accident should actually happen to my son and my daughter-in law, and their lives should be taken away, I could not carry on living my life any more. The Buddha does know about it very well, therefore, I fully believe this is the reason only I myself have got off with this kind of wounds and physical damages, rather than other family members indeed. My heart and mind are enormously overwhelmed with wholehearted thankfulness and gratefulness toward the Buddha.

While in bed at the hospital, I had been wondering with a sense of anxiety whether or not I should refuse this role of personal Dharma Sharing. However, I strongly made up my mind to receive this crucial role and go to Japan at any cost, no matter what should

happen, as a representative of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center.

Next year in 2017, we will hold and celebrate the ceremony for enshrinement of the *gohonzon* and the inauguration ceremony of the newly constructed Dharma center in Sri Lanka. The new Dharma center is a precisely holy, venerated sanctuary for us members of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center. I'm very much looking forward to installing the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni there at the worship hall of the new Dharma center from now on.

It would have been no wonder if I had already lost my current life in that car accident actually, and so in that sense, I'm sure that the present life is definitely given by the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni without fail. I shall make a vow to spread and disseminate teachings of the Lotus Sutra diligently, making full use of my given life, and firmly believing in the universal truth which President Niwano has been preaching and mentioning with these expressions that "The Eternal Buddha is absolute!" and "The Dharma is absolute!"

To my Japanese Dharma friends here, thank you very much for your kind attention and cooperation.



Mrs. Alwis (left) and Mrs. Nadeepa Sudhasingha (right) discuss about an family education program.



Childcare lifeline

“How should I deal with my 14-year-old daughter, who is disobeying and resisting me?”

Q

My 14-year-old daughter, who is in the second year in junior high school, has recently begun to disobey me. She has her own mobile phone plan, and is always emailing somebody. She doesn't keep the curfew at home, and it seems like she shops for things that she couldn't afford with her own allowance. Her room is messy, but when I complain about it and warn her to clean it up, she just says “You are too fussy!” When I get strict with her, she becomes rebellious, and pulls away. How should I deal with my daughter in order to get along harmoniously with her?



A

Children generally become mentally independent from a parent at the age when they are in junior high school, and they begin to dislike being treated like little kids. They want to see things from their perspective, and to think of things on their own. At this age, they are apt to feel a strong repulsion toward orders or interference by parents, as well as parental dominance. The more strictly parents admonish their children, the more their minds break away from their parents, and somehow they go in the other direction.

Your daughter's expressing her willingness to live on her own signals the first step in her becoming an adult. Please learn to value the growing mind of hers, and watch over her spiritual change, while always remembering to stay calm. Specifically, why don't you look back and reflect upon yourself first, asking yourself whether or not you have one-sidedly tried to press your own values on your daughter toward every aspect of her daily life, such as using the mobile phone, the time of coming home, doing shopping with her allowance, how she uses her room, and so on? At the same time, it is crucially important that you as a parent should listen attentively to her true intention and what's on her mind, saying compassionately, “What's up? This isn't like you, is it? Is anything wrong?” and also should empathize with your daughter's feelings, respecting and accepting her own ways of setting schedules, planning, or thinking.

Of course, you don't need to follow your daughter's whims helplessly, but you should convey your own opinions and ideas about the curfew time or the utility of her spending money to understand each other's ideas, while firmly accepting and embracing her real heart and mind. The term *understand* signifies not only taking steps in the same direction and in the same mindset, but also mutually admitting and respecting each other's differences.

When children are junior high school students, parents need to take a position that acknowledges each other's differences, while trying to watch over their children carefully and supporting them. When their understanding deepens, parents and children can interact with each other with a considerate heart, putting themselves in the other's shoes.

That you were told by your daughter, “You are too fussy,” might mean that you had complained and nagged at her too often. Therefore, you should make your efforts to be sparing with words and stay compassionately close to her. These endeavors will no doubt get through to your daughter. When she perceives that she is recognized and trusted by her mother as an individual person, she will grow up to such an adult who can treasure other people, as well as herself.

Point

The stage of junior high school students is the age when they become conscious of their own Ideal Self and attempt to enhance their sense of pride, maintaining their strong desire to be approved by other people. Children would like to make an appeal to adults by showing their feelings in various ways, only because they want others to affirm them as individuals. Consequently, these expressed behaviors/actions sometimes turn to so called problem behaviors or rebelliousness by junior high school students. It is a remarkably precious point that parents should embrace those rebellious behaviors manifested by children as evidence of their very mental growth, and interact with children warmheartedly with a considerate attitude.

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

“Childcare Lifeline” is produced every month with the cooperation of the Tokyo Research Institute for Family Education. The institute believes that changes for the better in parents' thinking and behavior will also bring about changes in their children. The institute holds lectures and seminars for parents throughout Japan and in other countries and also offers parents personal counseling on childrearing. Since its foundation in 1975, the institute's programs have helped parents and children grow spiritually together to create harmonious, happy homes.



Always Keeping the Mind of Putting Palms Together

YOUR daughter seems to have become unstable both mentally and physically upon entering early adolescence. This, however, provides your daughter an opportunity to grow in a remarkable way, and become mentally strong.

In such a situation, how should parents watch over their children? President Nichiko Niwano teaches us as follows:

If parents awaken to the Buddha Dharma, and are always feeling grateful and thankful, even though their children speak or behave in a shockingly harsh way, they can accept it in a calm and peaceful manner. Such parents shall never forget the spirit of *gassho* (putting one's palms together in reverence). Then, children will come to embrace their sense of reliance toward their parents on seeing their attitude, and will be able to open up, and try to frankly express their own sufferings to them" (*Ichijo bukkuretto: Tootoi inochi o hagukumu niwa* [One Vehicle booklet: Nurturing a precious life], p. 43, 5–9).

You should grow as a mother, as your daughter grows. When she is fourteen years old, you are in your fourteenth year as a mother. Then, why don't you stay affectionately close to your daughter, who is dealing with an unstable state of mind, while revering her precious life received from the Buddha, and learn yourself from the interaction with your daughter?

(Editorial supervision by the Department of Dharma Education & Human Resources Development, Rishsho Kosei-kai)



Please give us your comments!



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

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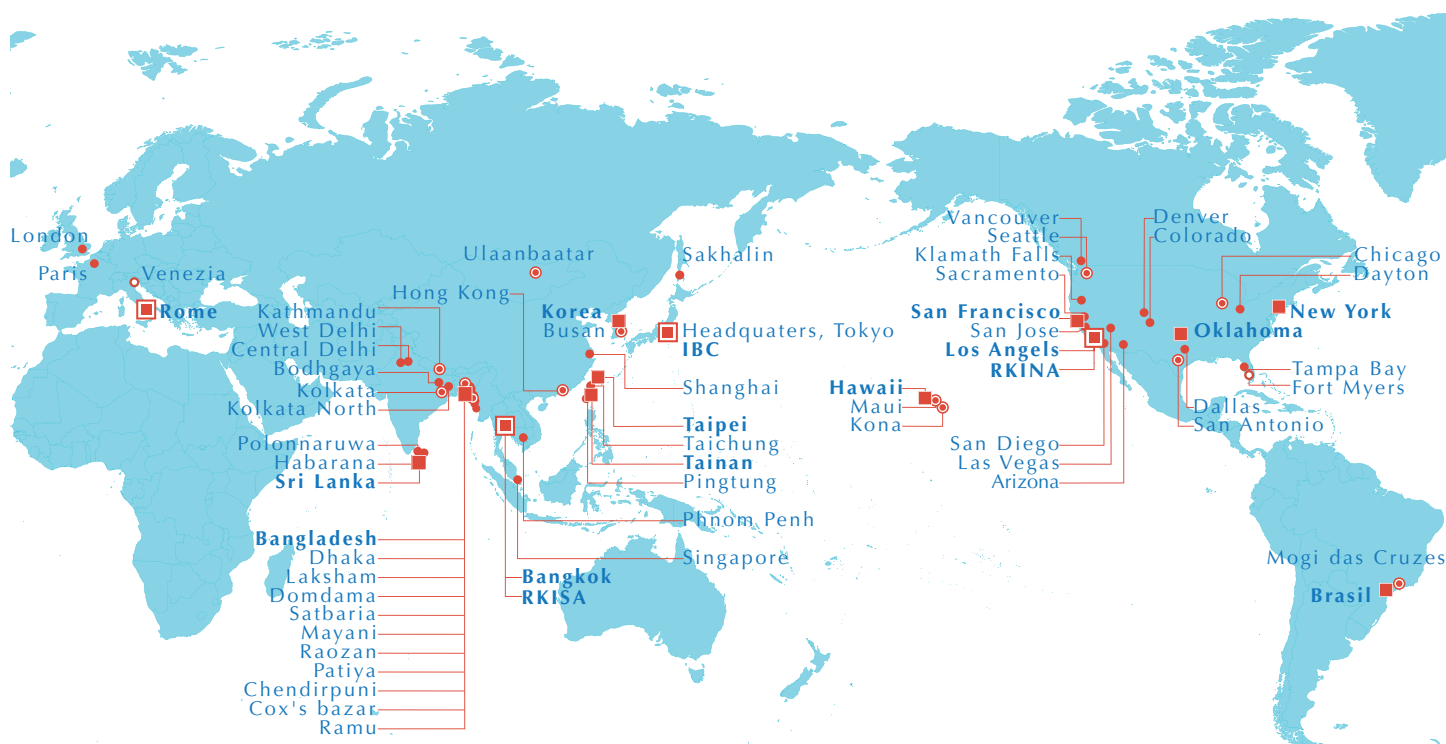
Revering the Buddha in Oneself and in Others

ON June 4, the inauguration ceremony of the new Dharma center of Rissho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka was held in a suburb of Colombo, the country's largest city. It is solely due to the diligent practices of Rev. Yoshiaki Yamamoto, minister of Rissho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka, and those of all the Sri Lankan members, that the new center, in which the statue of the Eternal Buddha is enshrined, is now open in the Theravada Buddhist country of Sri Lanka.

What Rev. Yamamoto has consistently shared with the Sri Lankan members, since his inauguration as the minister in 2010, is the practice of revering the Buddha in oneself and in others. For Sri Lankan members who had originally had great respect for the Buddha, the phrase "the Buddha" meant the most respectful and the supreme Lord Shakyamuni. So it was very difficult at the beginning to believe that such a highly respectful saint is present within them. However, as a result of Rev. Yamamoto's enduring efforts in sharing the teachings and practicing them himself over the last eight years, the members are now able to see the Buddha within themselves, and pay reverence to the Buddha in others, in a natural manner.

Through the inauguration ceremony of the new Dharma center, I was deeply touched by the Sri Lankan members' sincere practice of revering the buddha-nature in oneself and in others, and their overflowing joy received from the practice of the faith.

Rev. Shoko Mizutani
Director of Rissho Kosei-kai International



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