

# Living the Lotus

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*Buddhism in Everyday Life*

## Founder's Reflections

### Everything Is by the Grace of Another

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano

HAVING passed another year safe and sound, I'm deeply moved by the thought of how much the Buddha has watched over me.

A line of a certain poem goes: "The dandelion blossoms thanks to its roots and leaves." How often are we so taken with the beauty of a flower that we forget it blooms thanks to its roots and leaves? Likewise, don't we live our lives taking each other for granted, seeing no need to be thankful to our husbands, wives, parents, children, and all the people around us? We aren't able to see the most important things in life unless we keep the eyes of our hearts wide open.

Ryokei Onishi (1875–1983), who lived to the grand old age of 107, was chief priest of Kiyomizu-dera, a Buddhist temple in Kyoto. He left us with the saying, "Paradise is living life saying 'thank you' to others."

At the end of another year, I hope that we reflect on our debts of gratitude to all the people in our lives.

*Kaiso zuikan* 9 (Kosei Publishing, 1997), pp. 202–203

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.

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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 Message*

### Living Each Day Refreshed

Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

#### *“This Is the Place of the Way”*

This year, we were all forced to change our lifestyles due to the effects of the new coronavirus.

Some of you may have been infected with the virus or lost someone close to you. I'm not alone in praying that the physical and psychological pain of the many affected people, along with the collective anxiety about this disease, will disappear as soon as possible.

No matter how our lifestyles change, however, there are some things we should never forget.

As the Buddhist scholar Shobun Kubota (1896–1986) said, “For people who are living their faith in the Lotus Sutra, no matter what kind of place they are living in, that is the place of the Way” because “practicing and mastering the Lotus Sutra takes place in the midst of our daily lives.”

Even if you've felt anxious or afraid during this coronavirus pandemic, have you remembered to be considerate in your interactions with people? Have you been able to understand the attitudes of those who have different opinions and accept them gently and flexibly? For us, “this is the place of the Way,” and therefore, each and every encounter in our daily life presents us with an opportunity for spiritual diligence.

#### *When Your Mind Is Pure*

Chapter 19 of the Lotus Sutra, “The Merits of the Teachers of the Dharma,” describes how—through their attitude toward life and their daily words and actions—people who practice and broadly share the teachings of the Lotus Sutra purify their six sense faculties (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind).

In Japan, we often chant the phrase “rokkon shojo” while climbing a mountain; this translates to “purify the six sense faculties.” As we head toward the summit, surrounded by the beauty of nature and breathing fresh air, our bodies and minds are washed clean. The mysterious spiritual energy emitted by the mountain itself and

## President's Message

the workings of the gods and the buddhas presiding over it sharpen and cleanse our senses and help us return to our original, untarnished minds.

Even without climbing a mountain, however, we have methods to accept whatever happens calmly and live each day refreshed, with a pure mind. One method is to practice “this is the place of the Way.”

To do this, focus on seeing the good in people—do not give in to the feelings that may make you look for the bad. Accept everything with relish. Make sutra recitation a natural habit, and when you see someone, put your hands together respectfully before them without thinking about it. When you become able to spontaneously perform such practices, with a pure mind, you will be leading a harmonious daily life, won't you?

My teacher, Yukio Sakamoto, said that “our daily life is, in itself, our practice of the Buddha Way. At the same time, it is where the work and the deeds of the Buddha are done—that is, the action by which the Buddha liberates living beings.” In other words, while our day-to-day diligence continues to grow, it is also liberating us so we are always experiencing the refreshing happiness of a carefree mind.

This passage from “The Merits of the Teachers of the Dharma” shows what I've discussed so far: “The upholders of this Dharma Flower Sutra / Will attain such a purified sense faculty of thinking that, / Even without reaching a state of nondefilement, / They will have characteristics like these. / These people who uphold this sutra / Will steadfastly abide in a state of wonder, / Rejoiced in, loved, / And revered by all living beings.”

What's more, the person the Buddha is talking to here is the Bodhisattva Ever Diligent. My personal interpretation of this is that the Buddha is encouraging us to be bodhisattvas who never forget to show compassion, kindness, and warmth for anyone—anytime, anywhere.

As the end of the year draws near, every home will undergo a thorough spring cleaning. But in order to welcome the new year with a refreshed feeling, we need to do a spring cleaning of our minds. When you look back on this year, what encouraging words of the Buddha's inspired you?

From *Kosei*, December 2020

# Spiritual Journey

## Learning the Importance of Accepting People Entirely

Rafael Diego de Serrão Moraes  
Rissho Kosei-kai of Brazil

*This Dharma Journey talk was delivered at Rissho Kosei-kai of Brazil on February 16, 2020, during the ceremony commemorating Shakyamuni's entrance to nirvana.*

**H**ELLO, everyone. My name is Rafael Diego de Serrão Moraes. I have a doctorate in sociology and now work as a coordinator of welfare projects.

My encounter with Rissho Kosei-kai was in 2012, when a friend invited me to the Brazil Dharma Center. My friend has since drawn away from the Buddha's teachings, but I've continued to come to the Dharma center.

I was born in a Catholic family and I went to the church until the age of thirteen. There was something in the teachings of the Catholic church that I couldn't fully agree with, however, and I began to attend the church less and less. I had opportunities to study other religious faiths after that, but I didn't have any special interest in them. But, since I was always interested in Buddhism, when I got to know Rissho Kosei-kai, I was impressed with its teachings and decided to become a member.

I tend to be shy and I'm not good at presenting myself. I don't like talking about myself or my life because I worry about how people will think of me and I'm afraid of being criticized. Talking in front of people like this is not easy for me. However, when Ms. Hiromi Sasaki invited me to speak about my spiritual journey, I thought it would be a good opportunity to challenge my weakness, and I decided to accept her offer with gratitude.

The first thing I learned about Rissho Kosei-kai after joining the Brazil Dharma Center was that people here revere everything about you and accept you entirely—not just your positive aspects. We meet all kinds of people in our daily lives; sometimes these people are self-centered or arrogant, hard to get along with, or they throw harsh words at us.

But the members of the Brazil Dharma Center accept everyone without criticizing them. I was impressed with their warmth and open-mindedness, and I am truly grateful that I could become a member of this wonderful sangha.

As I saw the sangha members accept others as they are, I began to think that I should put what I learned from them into practice, and I made it my goal to become able to understand other people's feelings without criticism. I can't always do this, however, and sometimes I become critical of people who are unfriendly to me. But I will never give up this goal and my continued practice of the teachings.

I have learned a lot from practicing Rissho Kosei-kai's teachings. Today, I would like to share one specific lesson.



*Mr. Moraes delivers his Dharma Journey talk at Rissho Kosei-kai of Brazil.*

# Spiritual Journey

I like bicycling, and I always ride my bike to the Dharma center. Some of you may have noticed that I'm often a bit sweaty when I arrive, because of my ride. One Sunday two years ago, I woke up early and thought, "Today is my birthday. I won't bike to the Dharma center today. I think everyone will congratulate me, so I should wear nicer clothes and use the subway. It will be a shame if I'm sweating all over!"

I changed into clothes that were better than usual and left home, arriving at the Dharma center twenty minutes before sutra recitation began. When I entered the hall, I saw Ms. Sasaki, who looked like she was in a hurry. As soon as she spotted me, she said, "Good morning, Rafael. Could I ask you to clean the lobby?" I said yes and grabbed a bucket, a wiping cloth, and a mop, and I started wiping the floor. But as I was cleaning, I felt sad and frustrated, thinking to myself, "Today I came in better clothes because it's my birthday. Why do I have to do this?"

I finished cleaning right before sutra recitation began. No one seemed to know it was my birthday, so I didn't receive birthday wishes from anyone.

On my way home, I reflected on what had happened during the day and looked deeply into my mind. I was disappointed because nobody had given me birthday wishes. But, I realized, I had only been thinking about myself that day. I had received a lot of valuable insights from the sangha of the Brazil Dharma Center. But I had always been receiving—I hadn't given anything back.

When I realized this, I began to feel that cleaning the lobby on my birthday had been an invaluable opportunity to pay back, even a little, my debt of gratitude owed to the sangha. Cleaning the lobby was a priceless birthday present that the Buddha prepared to help me remove my self-centered mind and become more considerate of others.

Furthermore, I am glad to report to you that I've been putting what I've learned from Risho Kosei-kai into practice in my job. For the past year, I lived in Roraima, the northernmost state of Brazil, working as a coordinator of several social projects that support the Venezuelan refugees who live in camps there. The political and social situations in Venezuela have deteriorated, and the country's economy is in a state of collapse. Because of hyperinflation, bank deposits and cash are no better than scrap paper, and people

cannot obtain the necessities of life. Job availability has worsened and people can't find a place to work. A Venezuelan man told me that millions of people had fled the country.

During my stay, more than one thousand refugees were living in the camps, with one small tent allocated to each family. The people were in a state of tension and anxiety, unable to picture their future. They were forced to live inconvenient lives that were far from comfort, as there was a limit to what we could do to support them materially. While I was interacting with the refugees, I realized what they needed most was someone who would listen to them and share their feelings. For those of us who work in the camps as project staff, this means to never forget to show compassion, and to accept the refugees in their entirety. I've learned this important mindset from the members of the Brazil Dharma Center, who never criticized my shortcomings and who accepted me as a whole person. Now, on my part, I'm going to bring this approach into my interactions with the refugees who have gone through enormous pain and struggle before reaching Roraima. I will try my best to accept them in their entirety.

I pledge my continued dedication to the practice of the Dharma by keeping in mind the importance of seeing things as they are and accepting people fully.

The Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, Founder Nikkyo Niwano, thank you very much.

President Nichiko Niwano, thank you very much.

Everyone in the sangha, thank you very much.



*Mr. Morales joins an online Sunday service.*

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

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano



The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma

## Chapter 20

### The Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect

#### The Single, Repeated Practice of Revering Buddha-Nature in Others

The great root of human unhappiness is the mistaken idea or illusion that the physical body is the self. As long as this illusion exists, care for the physical body comes before all else, and one's first thought is always for its satisfaction. Other people become secondary, and with so many acting in this way, we take from each other and push each other around. The result is endless unease, anxiety, and pain.

If humanity is to be rescued and society is to be at peace, this illusion must be destroyed and replaced by an awareness of the buddha-nature in all people. Certainly it's desirable to try to make people "better" by regulating their attitude and everyday conduct, teaching them to do what is right, but this method alone will never be effective. Only when a person awakens to the truth of buddha-nature will their urge to do wrong disappear, for an awakened individual is incapable of doing what is ugly or shameful.

Such an awakening does not stop with the individual, however—the person also awakens to the basic truth that all people possess buddha-nature and are caused to live by the Original Buddha. Thus, out of a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood, people become able to live in harmony.

This chapter illustrates this principle by relating the history of a bodhisattva of the ancient past: the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect. By the single, repeated act of revering the buddha-nature in others, Never Unworthy of Respect achieved the enlightenment of a buddha and brought numerous others to that same enlightenment.

Whenever he came across people, this bodhisattva made a deep bow of respect toward them and praised them with the words, "I could never find you unworthy of respect because you are all destined to become buddhas." Put simply, he saw straight through to others' buddha-nature. But people did not understand him, and they took his words as an insult. They pelted him with stones and struck him with sticks. However, even as he escaped from them, Never Unworthy of Respect would still loudly exclaim from a distance, "I could never find you unworthy of respect, as all of you will become buddhas."

Through his steadfast practice of this one act, Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect was able, as death was near, to perceive the universal truth set forth in the Lotus Sutra and gain awareness of the buddha-nature intrinsic to every human being. He expounded this truth throughout his countless rebirths, and at last he attained the Buddha Way.





It is made plain here that this bodhisattva was none other than Shakyamuni himself in a previous life. In other words, Shakyamuni himself became the Buddha through his awareness of the buddha-nature of all human beings and his sustained efforts to reveal it.

### Expounding the Teaching Is Also Important

The Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect's practice began simply as a way to revere the buddha-nature in others, but when these others finally became aware of their buddha-nature, he began to teach this truth as doctrine. We ourselves must watch and learn from this. We must move beyond recognizing and revering the buddha-nature in others to expounding the doctrine of the truth in the Lotus Sutra in order to help all people realize and reveal their buddha-nature. From this active effort, each individual's understanding will be deepened and the world will be made a better place.

### Persistent Effort

Like the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect, we must continue this effort earnestly with unchanging faith. We cannot give up and throw in the towel because we may despair at the hopeless state of the world. Neither oneself nor the world will be liberated this way.

Buddha-nature in every human being is everlasting and imperishable, so we must continue this great work with firm determination, through countless births and deaths. This is yet another lesson we can learn from the example of the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect.

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. 188–92).



# Director's Column

## Let Us Be Bodhisattvas Who Are Ever Diligent

Rev. Koichi Saito

**D**ECEMBER is the month when people wrap up the year and prepare for a fresh start.

In his message for this month, “Living Each Day Refreshed,” President Nichiko Niwano reflects on this year and reminds us that, even in the midst of the trying circumstances caused by the coronavirus pandemic, it is important to always interact with people compassionately and in the spirit of “this is the place of the Way.”

In particular, he calls on us to be diligent in our bodhisattva practice without forgetting to show compassion for anyone—anytime, anywhere.

On a personal note, last month I was appointed minister of the Ota Dharma Center in Tokyo and the director of the West Tokyo Division, and Rev. Keiichi Akagawa was appointed director of Risho Kosei-kai International. Beginning this month, under the leadership of the new director, I hope that the global dissemination of the Dharma will be developed even more actively and widely.

On taking a step into a new Dharma journey myself, I pledge that I will endeavor to interact with people by always keeping the importance of compassion in mind so that every encounter may bring a seed of joy to those I meet.

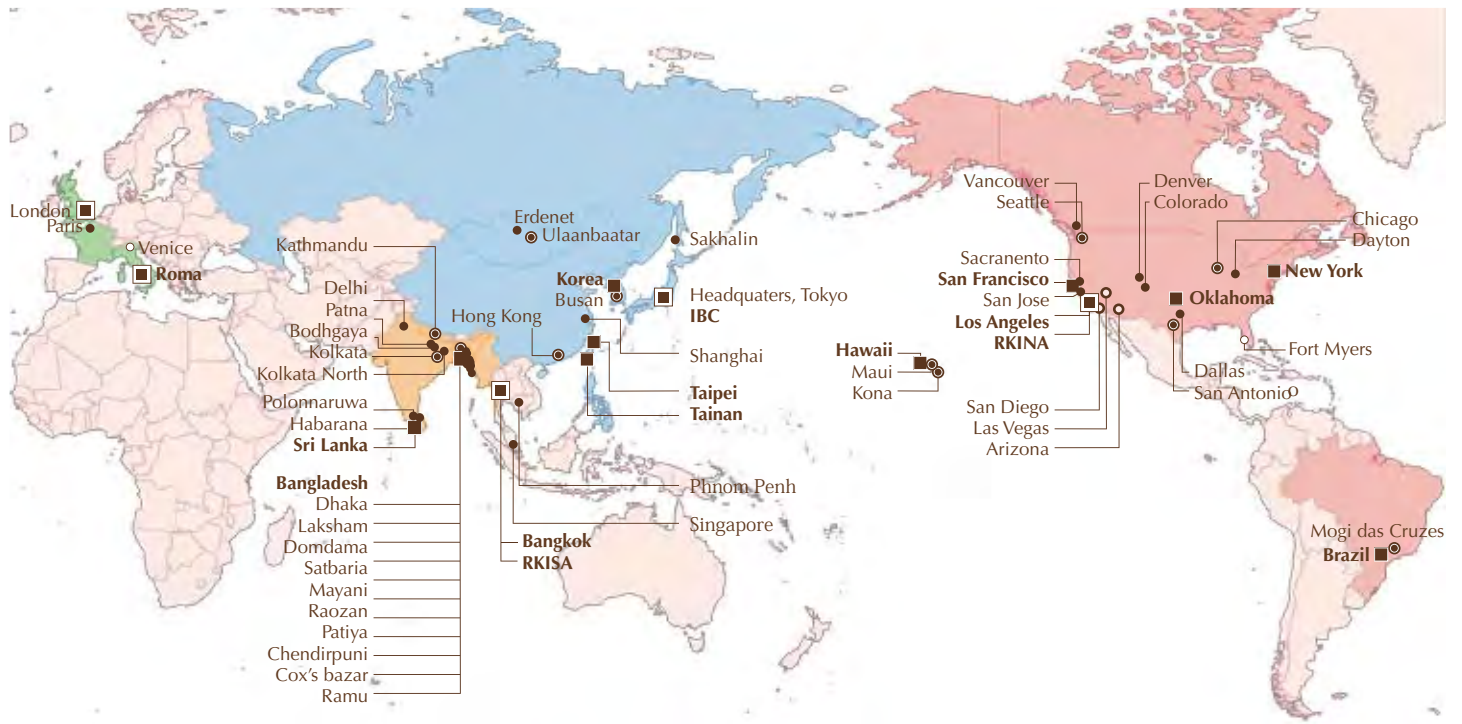
Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the valuable support I've received from all of you during the last three years. Thank you very much.



Rev. Keiichi Akagawa (left) and Rev. Koichi Saito.



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