

# Living the Lotus

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## *Buddhism in Everyday Life*

### *Founder's Reflections*

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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Senior Editor: Keiichi Akagawa  
Editor: Jigjikhörloo Gereltuya  
Copy Editor: Ayshea Wild

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Rissho Kosei-kai International,  
Fumon Media Center 3F, 2-7-1 Wada,  
Suginami-ku, Tokyo 166-8537, Japan.  
TEL: +81-3-5341-1124 / FAX: +81-3-5341-1224  
Email: [living.the.lotus.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp](mailto:living.the.lotus.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp)

## Practice That Orders Daily Life

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano

PRACTITIONERS first learn how to perform morning and evening sutra recitation at their Buddhist altars every day; they also visit the Dharma center on memorial days and join Dharma circles. As they begin striving to adapt themselves to the teachings of the Buddha, everything in their lives will become Buddhist practice. “Practice” means behavior, and we can describe the practice of lay Buddhists as learning to adjust one’s daily behaviors, one by one, in light of the teachings of the Buddha.

To assume that you can understand Buddhism through intellectual study alone is like thinking that you can pick up golf just by reading a book on how to improve your golf game, or expecting that you’ll be able to learn how to play a musical instrument simply by reading a lesson book. I can’t imagine that anyone would think like this, and it’s the same when it comes to Buddhism.

Religion is not about learning information, but adopting a way of life. When you study a teaching, put it into practice the way you’ve been taught, and learn by experiencing it for yourself. This becomes easier when there is someone close to you who watches over your practice. The presence of fellow sangha members will help your practice become the real thing.

*Kaiso zuikan* 10 (Kosei Publishing, 1997), pp. 250–51

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.

# Knowing the Source of Suffering Wisdom, Part 1

Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



## Receiving the Wisdom of the Buddha

“When I’m playing, / It feels so small. / When I’m set to picking up pebbles during morning cleanup, / It feels so big.” I quoted this poem, “The Playground,” in my book, *Cultivating the Buddhist Heart: How to Find Peace and Fulfillment in a Changing World* (Kosei Publishing, 2008). In thinking about the meaning of wisdom, the sixth of the Six Paramitas, this poem written by a fourth-grade elementary school student teaches us something important we can all relate to. Therefore, I would like you to keep it in the back of your mind.

Buddhist wisdom has such definitions as, “Penetrating insight into the principle of impermanence” (*Iwanami bukkyo jiten* [Iwanami Buddhist dictionary], Iwanami Shoten), and “The ability to perceive and judge things correctly, in line with such Buddhist truths as emptiness,” and “One of the Six Paramitas, *prajna*” (*Daijirin*, Sanseido). To summarize, wisdom is “the ability to grasp the truths of impermanence and emptiness” and “mental functioning that makes the right decisions based on reason and logic.” That said, this seemingly difficult word, wisdom, is one we often use in conversations with members of our sangha (friends in the faith).

I think we all know what it’s like when someone in the sangha, listening sympathetically to our hardships, offers us encouragement by saying, “Try to be diligent in the practice so that you can receive the wisdom of the Buddha,” or “Once you get the Buddha’s wisdom, you will be liberated.” However, is this wisdom actually something that we receive from the Buddha?

In the sense of recognizing the truth realized by Shakyamuni and making decisions based on that truth, I think it is not impossible to say, in consideration of our respect and gratitude toward Shakyamuni, that we receive wisdom from the Buddha. In reality though, wisdom is not something that Shakyamuni Buddha bestows upon us. Rather, we realize that we have within ourselves the power to perceive the truth and make decisions—wisdom—and apply that wisdom from time to time in our daily lives, which is nothing less than we, as disciples of the Buddha, receiving his wisdom.



## Taking Control of Our Attachments

Why, then, is wisdom so important in Buddhism? Looking at the following lines of verse from the Suttanipata, an anthology of the words of the Buddha, we can gain a better understanding of the importance of wisdom.

“If people hope that their desires are fulfilled and things go well for them, [when] their human desires have been truly satisfied, their hearts rejoice.” However, “If the people who hope to have their desires fulfilled are so greedy that they cannot be satisfied, they suffer as if shot by arrows.” In other words, “The many kinds of suffering in this world are caused by forming connections to attachments.” (Quoted from *Budda no kotoba: Suttanipata* [The words of the Buddha: Suttanipata] by Hajime Nakamura [Iwanami Shoten, 1984.] )

Therefore, if our wisdom takes control of desires and attachments, suffering goes away on its own. Please recall the fourth-grader’s poem quoted earlier. It is true, after all, that we human beings often complain that the same playground “feels so small” when we are playing and “so big” when we have to clear it of pebbles, because the mind of selfishness wants to do as it pleases, which is the source of suffering and anxiety.

This is why Shakyamuni left us many hints for acquiring wisdom that we can use to control our desires and attachments. For example, he tells us to “break through self-centered views and see the world as emptiness.”

While “emptiness” is a word that gives us the impression of something even more difficult to grasp, it means that we should stop making value judgments, such as viewing things as “big” or “small” based on self-centered thoughts or whatever suits us. We must accept reality honestly. In the next issue, we will learn more about emptiness.

By putting the wisdom inherent in each of us to use and stepping forward together confidently, feeling as refreshed as the clear autumn sky, let’s move forward as bodhisattvas who show consideration for others.

From *Kosei*, October 2022

# Spiritual Journey

## Becoming Aware of the Gifts from the Buddha

Ms. Yukari Gubbini  
Rissho Kosei-kai London Center

*This Dharma Journey talk was presented at the Ullambana ceremony  
held in Rissho Kosei-kai's London Center on July 16, 2022.*

HELLO everyone. Thank you for giving me this wonderful opportunity today. I would like to share something I found out recently.

Firstly I would like to briefly talk about my Dharma Journey with Rissho Kosei-kai when I was young. It was around my high school years when I first participated in Rissho Kosei-kai's activities at the Haramachi Dharma Center in Fukushima Prefecture, Japan. I felt so comfortable and simply happy to be with sangha friends—people who were not only of the same generation as me but also just like my parents and grandparents. We learned about the Lotus Sutra and the Buddha's teachings together through many kinds of activities and study sessions, as well as retreats. There were also wonderful Dharma circle sessions (*hoza*), where we could share problems and receive the Dharma guidance. I was very fortunate to be able to learn the Dharma through everyday experiences.

One day, I read a book by Founder Nikkyo Niwano about the world peace activities he performed through Religions for Peace. It touched my heart deeply. I was very excited and moved by his thoughts and actions, facilitated by interfaith dialogue.

After that, my interests became more global. I was very curious to see how the Dharma teachings worked in different cultures, especially in western countries. I didn't have many opportunities to learn about this at the time because I lived in a provincial town, so I visited the headquarters of Rissho Kosei-kai in Tokyo regularly. There I participated in Dharma study sessions in English led by Dr. Gene Reeves (then an international advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai), and I had some wonderful opportunities, such as volunteering in international assemblies of

Religions for Peace. These experiences opened my eyes wider and gave me a lot of inspiration.

Through my encounters with wonderful members and people from other religions, my faith became stronger, and I grew to respect different cultures and religions. My experiences convinced me that there is only one universal truth, which we call the wondrous Dharma, and the Dharma teaching applies to people around the world. That's why I really wanted to go and see how the Dharma teachings were working in the west. "I would like to be a part of the Founder's work for peace," started as a hope and then became a vow for me. Around that time, in 2002, I got married and moved to the United Kingdom.

I have now been living in the UK for over twenty years. Thankfully, the London Center opened in 2020. Although Rissho Kosei-kai UK had a small sangha community, we kept a Dharma flame steadfastly lighted. From 2012, when Rissho Kosei-kai opened a center in Rome, Rev. Katsutoshi Mizumo, the center's director, had visited the UK regularly, giving us opportunities to learn and practice the Dharma together. That was a great encouragement for our sangha, which we are so grateful for.



*Ms. Yukari Gubbini gives her Dharma Journey talk at the Ullambana ceremony (second from left).*



# Spiritual Journey

Currently, I am taking the Introduction to the Three-fold Lotus Sutra course, led by Rev. Kyoichiro Hosoya, director of the London Center, which is the very first proper course at the London Center. I am really enjoying learning together, especially sharing thoughts with sangha members; it gives me a new perspective, as there are always wonderful discoveries happening.

The other day, while I was studying in the seminar, I suddenly realized this was exactly what I had wished to see twenty years ago. Since the London Center opened, the sangha members have increased, and our Dharma activities and *hoza* sessions have become more active. I was quite startled to see clearly before my eyes what I had dreamed of twenty years ago. I'm confident in saying that the Dharma wheel is rolling here in Europe.

I hadn't forgotten my original vow, "I would like to be a part of the Founder's work for peace," but I had become less conscious of it while my life was gradually changing. So, my sudden realization that my dream had come true was a wonderful reminder from the Buddha. I had taken this current situation for granted, but actually it was the result of many sangha members' wishes, aspirations, and efforts. Since the London Center opened, the Buddha has sent us many messages and gifts, which we sometimes don't notice. If we look around us more closely, we will see them and notice there are plenty more.

This week we learned chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra, "Teachers of the Dharma," during which I had another wonderful discovery: after you rejoice from listening to a word or a phrase from the Lotus Sutra, this single, rejoicing thought will become the seed for attaining buddhahood. This is the seed that will grow into a beautiful flower, so you need to keep watering and nurturing it diligently. I understood the importance of the *first* rejoicing because it provides good encouragement to get started with the bodhisattva practice.

Even more important is making the seed grow by practicing the teachings over and over for a long period of time. The Lotus Sutra teaches us that the bodhisattva practice should continue for a very long time. I clearly remembered my first aspiration: "I would like to be a part of the Founder's work for peace." That was my seed. At one point in my life I thought the goal was too far to reach. But I had been

on the right track, even though it was a winding road. My past and my present were connected, and the Buddha had always been watching over me and guiding me. My heart was delighted when I realized this.

When I married my Italian husband, came to the UK, and became the mother of two sons, my days became very busy, and my lifestyle changed completely. I had some ups and downs—a lot of happiness, but I also struggled with illness and depression for several years. I started to feel unworthy because I thought I wasn't contributing anything to society. Once, when I temporarily lost connection with society due to illness, I often criticized myself, thinking *I am not good enough, I am not doing enough*. I felt pain in my body and my heart. It was a hard time.

But now I see all those experiences, and every little step in my life, as assets. My steps might have been small sometimes, but now I can acknowledge that I was doing my best at the time, so there was no need to criticize myself. It was me who did the criticizing; nobody else, and not the Buddha. There was always someone giving me a heartfelt message, but I couldn't accept it with my whole heart at the time.



*A sushi rolling workshop after the Ullambana ceremony.*

# Spiritual Journey

The Eternal Buddha is always guiding me on the right path. I was exactly like the poor son in the parable of the rich elder and his poor son in chapter 4 of the Lotus Sutra. The Lotus Sutra also says that we are born in this human realm with a bodhisattva wish to liberate human beings. How do we want to live our lives? I may sometimes think *I don't really know*, but my heart, my buddha nature always knows it and remembers it. The Buddha sends us a lot of messages every day, at every moment. Whether we notice them or not depends on how we see them. We become confused because so many things happen in everyday life.

Daily recitation and meditation are important practices to help me clear my clouded mind. How to see phenomena is the key. The difficulties in my life had made my days dark because of the way I looked at them, but as I noticed hidden messages from the Buddha, they turned into precious learning experiences. It is totally up to us whether or not we can turn our hardships into treasures.

I see others' buddha nature but sometimes overlook my own. I too have the buddha nature. It is important to listen to our true hearts and acknowledge our buddha nature. Reflection is necessary, but there is no need to judge or criticize ourselves because the Buddha never passes judgment on us. He always looks at us as we are, with compassion.

I should respect my buddha nature as I respect others'. We should nurture our seeds of buddhahood and cultivate our buddha nature—that is what I had missed earlier in my life. If we are happy, people around us will become happy; then the community will also become happy, and world peace will eventually be achieved. Every little thing we do can make a difference in the world, so I will do my part every day and everywhere.

Lastly, I would like to express my huge gratitude to the sangha members and all my family, who have supported me throughout my life. Thank you very much for listening.



Ms. Gubbini with sangha members of the London Center.



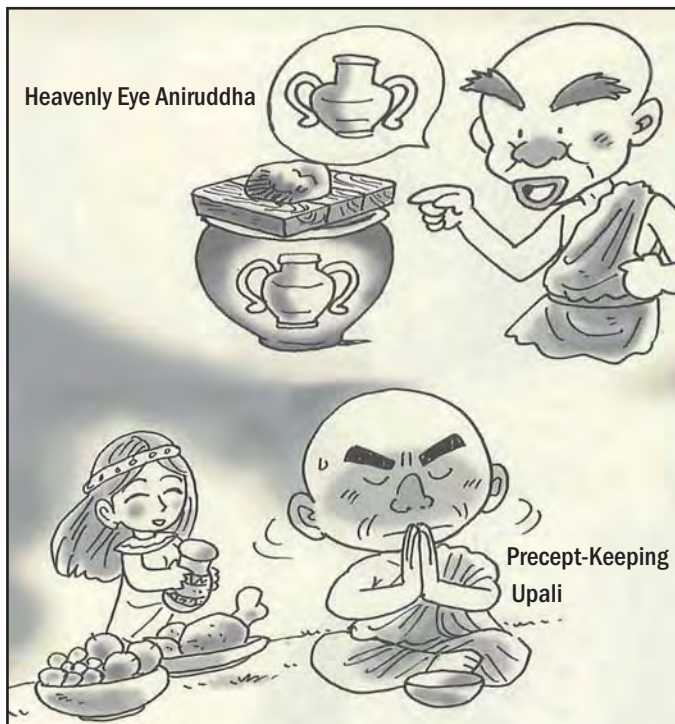
# An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

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

### The Ten Great Disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha—Part 2

Aniruddha, known as Heavenly Eye Aniruddha, had divine insight, or clairvoyance; the ability to foresee all things. Upali observed precepts well and played an important role reciting and reviewing the vinaya of monks and nuns during the First Council, which was held to compile scripture after the Buddha's passing.

Ananda was the primary attendant of Shakyamuni Buddha. He was the disciple who had heard Shakyamuni Buddha's expositions most often. Rahula, the son of Shakyamuni Buddha, was foremost in his eagerness for learning. He practiced the Buddha's teachings consistently, but without pride or seeking praise. Maha-Kashyapa was distinguished for practicing austerities. He concentrated on the practices with no attachment to food, clothing, or shelter, and thereby received a robe from Shakyamuni Buddha.



#### Did You Know?

The heavenly eye is one of the transcendent powers: the power to see into not only material things, but also the past, present, and future.





### All Things Are Produced by Causation



Shakyamuni Buddha renounced the world and sought for a way to get rid of anxiety about illness and death. As a result of his continued seeking, he attained enlightenment; in other words, he realized dependent origination, one of the core teachings in Buddhism.

Dependent origination is the doctrine of causality, which teaches that everything results from a combination of causes and conditions. For example, a flower seed only sprouts after certain conditions are met, such as enough water, soil, and sunlight. In addition, because insects visit flowers and pollinate them, the flowers bear fruit. Conversely, flower seeds don't sprout unless the necessary conditions for sprouting are met. And if flowers are not pollinated, they cannot bear fruit.

Dependent origination teaches that, in the same way, if we eliminate the causes and conditions for anxiety and suffering, they will certainly disappear. If we correctly understand this doctrine of dependent origination and master it, our minds can always stay peaceful.





## Director's Column

### Encouragement to Look at Things Without Taking a Fixed Perspective

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa

Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

**H**ELLO to all readers of my column. For those of us in today's busy society, it's important to take a moment out of our hectic daily lives to stop for a while and allow ourselves time for calm reflection. I sincerely hope that this column will provide you with some food for thought.

This month we will learn about wisdom—the last of the Six Paramitas—through the President's Dharma talk. The theme “Knowing the Source of Suffering” prompts us to ask the question, “What is the cause of suffering?” In Buddhism, “suffering” means “a state of mind arising from things not going one's way.” Ordinary people who do not know the Dharma tend, out of self-interest or for convenience, to let their selfish minds run wild in an attempt to fulfill their own desires. Doing so will eventually result in creating suffering for themselves, however, and they will drift into a state far removed from wisdom.

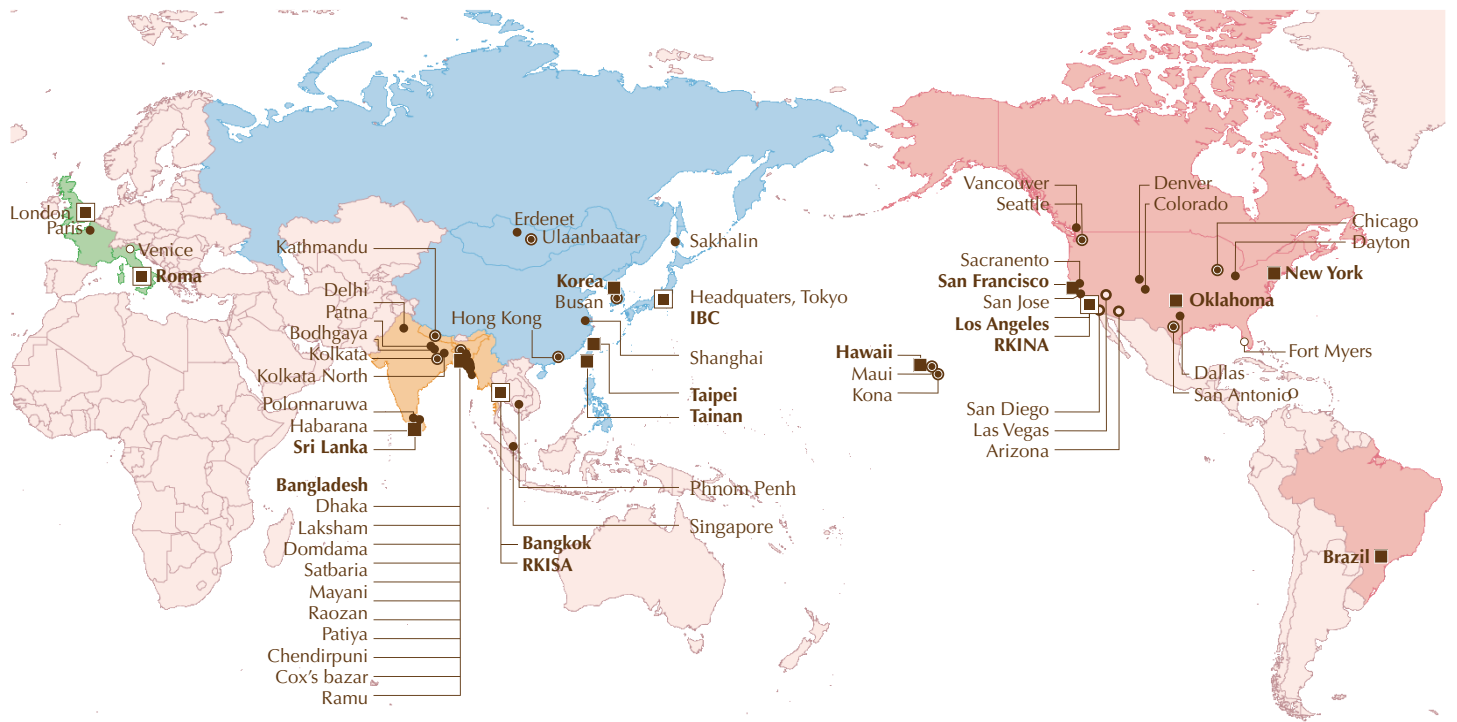
I recall the President's once saying that according to the Lotus Sutra to see properly is to “look at things as they are,” to “look at things without judgment,” or to “look at things without taking a fixed perspective.” Knowing that the source of suffering is a self-centered mind that runs amok, let us follow the President's advice and “put the wisdom inherent in each of us to use.”



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



# Rissho Kosei-kai: A Global Buddhist Movement



## Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Church of Hawaii

2280 Auhuhu Street, Pearl City, HI 96782, USA  
TEL: 1-808-455-3212 FAX: 1-808-455-4633  
Email: sangha@rkhawaii.org URL: <https://rkhawaii.org>

## Rissho Kosei-kai Maui Dharma Center

1809 Nani Street, Wailuku, HI 96793, USA  
TEL: 1-808-242-6175 FAX: 1-808-244-4625

## Rissho Kosei-kai Kona Dharma Center

73-4592 Mamalahoa Highway, Kailua-Kona, HI 96740, USA  
TEL: 1-808-325-0015 FAX: 1-808-333-5537

## Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Los Angeles

2707 East First Street, Los Angeles, CA 90033, USA  
TEL: 1-323-269-4741 FAX: 1-323-269-4567  
Email: info@rk-la.org URL: <https://www.rk-la.org>

Please contact Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Los Angeles

### Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Arizona

### Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Colorado

### Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of San Diego

### Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Las Vegas

### Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of Dallas

## Rissho Kosei-kai of San Francisco

(Address) 1031 Valencia Way, Pacifica, CA 94044, USA  
(Mail) POBox 778, Pacifica, CA 94044, USA  
TEL: 1-650-359-6951 Email: lotusbuddhist@gmail.com  
URL: <https://sf-buddhism.org>

Please contact Rissho Kosei-kai of San Francisco

## Rissho Kosei-kai of Sacramento

## Rissho Kosei-kai of New York

320 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016, USA  
TEL: 1-212-867-5677 Email: rkny39@gmail.com URL: <https://rk-ny.org>

## Rissho Kosei-kai of Chicago

1 West Euclid Ave., Mt. Prospect, IL 60056, USA  
TEL: 1-773-842-5654  
Email: rkchicago@rkchi.org URL: <http://rkchi.org>

## Rissho Kosei-kai of Fort Myers

Email: rkftmyersbuddhism@gmail.com URL: <https://rkftmyersbuddhism.org>

## Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Oklahoma

(Address) 2745 N.W. 40th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73112, USA  
(Mail) POBox 57138, Oklahoma City, OK 73157, USA  
TEL: 1-405-943-5030 FAX: 1-405-943-5303  
Email: dharmacenter@rkok-dharmacenter.org  
URL: <https://rkok-dharmacenter.org>

## Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Denver

1255 Galapago St. #809, Denver, CO 80204, USA  
TEL: 1-303-446-0792

## Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma Center of Dayton

617 Kling Drive, Dayton, OH 45419, USA  
URL: <http://www.rkina-dayton.com>

## The Buddhist Center Rissho Kosei-kai International of North America (RKINA)

2707 East First St., Suite #1, Los Angeles, CA 90033, USA  
TEL: 1-323-262-4430 FAX: 1-323-269-4567  
Email: info@rkina.org  
URL: <https://www.buddhistcenter-rkina.org>

## Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center of San Antonio

(Address) 6083 Babcock Road, San Antonio, TX 78240, USA  
(Mail) POBox 692148, San Antonio, TX 78249, USA  
TEL: 1-210-558-4430 FAX: 1-210-696-7745  
Email: dharmasa@rksabuddhistcenter.org  
URL: <https://rksabuddhistcenter.org>

## Rissho Kosei-kai of Seattle

28621 Pacific Highway South, Federal Way, WA 98003, USA  
TEL: 1-253-945-0024 Email: rkseattlewashington@gmail.com  
URL: <https://www.buddhistlearningcenter.org>

## Rissho Kosei-kai of Vancouver

Please contact RKINA

## Rissho Kosei-kai do Brasil

Rua Dr. José Estefno 40, Vila Mariana, São Paulo-SP, CEP 04116-060, Brasil  
TEL: 55-11-5549-4446, 55-11-5573-8377  
Email: risho@rkk.org.br URL: <http://rkk.org.br>  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/rishokosseikaidobrasil>  
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/rkkbrasil>



**在家佛教韓國立正佼成會 Korean Rissho Kosei-kai**

〒 04420 大韓民國 SEOUL 特別市龍山區漢南大路 8 路 6-3  
6-3, 8 gil Hannamdaero Yongsan gu, Seoul, 04420, Republic of Korea  
TEL: 82-2-796-5571 FAX: 82-2-796-1696

**在家佛教韓國立正佼成會釜山支部**

**Korean Rissho Kosei-kai of Busan**

〒 48460 大韓民國釜山廣域市南區水營路 174, 3F  
3F, 174 Suyoung ro, Nam gu, Busan, 48460, Republic of Korea  
TEL: 82-51-643-5571 FAX: 82-51-643-5572

**社團法人在家佛教立正佼成會 Rissho Kosei-kai of Taipei**

台灣台北市中正區衡陽路 10 號富群資訊大廈 4 樓  
4F, No. 10, Hengyang Road, Jhongheng District, Taipei City 100, Taiwan  
TEL: 886-2-2381-1632, 886-2-2381-1633 FAX: 886-2-2331-3433

**台南市在家佛教立正佼成會 Rissho Kosei-kai of Tainan**

台灣台南市東區崇明 23 街 45 號  
No. 45, Chongming 23rd Street, East District, Tainan City 701, Taiwan  
TEL: 886-6-289-1478 FAX: 886-6-289-1488  
Email: koseikaitainan@gmail.com

**Rissho Kosei-kai South Asia Division**

Thai Rissho Friendship Foundation  
201 Soi 15/1, Praram 9 Road, Bangkapi, Huaykhwang, Bangkok 10310, Thailand  
TEL: 66-2-716-8141

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Kathmandu**

Ward No. 3, Jhamsikhel, Sanepa-1, Lalitpur, Kathmandu, Nepal

**Rissho Kosei-kai Society of Kolkata**

89 Srirampur Road (VIP), Garia, Kolkata 700084, India

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Kolkata North**

AE/D/12 Arjunpur East, Teghoria, Kolkata 700059,  
West Bengal, India

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Bodhgaya**

Ambedkar Nagar, West Police Line Road, Rampur, Gaya-823001,  
Bihar, India

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Patna**

Please contact Rissho Kosei-kai Society of Kolkata

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Delhi**

77 Basement D.D.A. Site No. 1, New Rajinder Nagar,  
New Delhi 110060, India

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Singapore**

Please contact Rissho Kosei-kai International

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Phnom Penh**

W.C. 73, Toul Sampaov Village, Sangkat Toul Sangke, Khan Reouseykeo,  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

**Rissho Kosei-kai International of South Asia (RKISA)**

Thai Rissho Friendship Foundation  
201 Soi 15/1, Praram 9 Road, Bangkapi, Huaykhwang, Bangkok 10310, Thailand  
TEL: 66-2-716-8141

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Bangkok**

Thai Rissho Friendship Foundation  
201 Soi 15/1, Praram 9 Road, Bangkapi, Huaykhwang, Bangkok 10310, Thailand  
TEL: 66-2-716-8216 Email: info.thairissho@gmail.com

**Rissho Kosei Dhamma Foundation**

No. 628-A, Station Road, Hunupitiya, Wattala, Sri Lanka  
TEL: 94-11-2982406 FAX: 94-11-2982405

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Polonnaruwa**

Please contact Rissho Kosei Dhamma Foundation

**Rissho Kosei-kai Bangladesh**

85/A Chanmari Road, Lalkhan Bazar, Chittagong, Bangladesh  
TEL: 880-2-41360470

**Rissho Kosei-kai Mayani**

Mayani Barua Para, Mirsarai, Chittagong, Bangladesh

**Rissho Kosei-kai Damdama**

Damdama Barua Para, Mirsarai, Chittagong, Bangladesh

**Rissho Kosei-kai Satbaria**

Village: Satbaria Bepari Para, Chandanaih, Chittagong, Bangladesh

**Rissho Kosei-kai Chendhirpuni**

Village: Chendhirpuni, P.O.: Adhunagar, P.S.: Lohagara, Chittagong,  
Bangladesh

**Rissho Kosei-kai Raozan**

Dakkhin Para, Ramzan Ali Hat, Raozan, Chittagong, Bangladesh

**Rissho Kosei-kai Laksham**

Village: Dhupchor, Laksham, Comilla, Bangladesh

**Rissho Kosei-kai Dhaka North**

Bashundhara R/A, Dhaka, Bangladesh

**Rissho Kosei-kai Cox's Bazar**

Ume Burmize Market, Tekpara, Sadar, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Please contact Rissho Kosei-kai Bangladesh

**Rissho Kosei-kai Patiya**

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**Buddiyskiy khram "Lotos"**

4 Gruzinski Alley, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk 693005, Russia  
TEL: 7-4242-77-05-14

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Hong Kong**

Flat D, 5/F, Kiu Hing Mansion, 14 King's Road, North Point, Hong Kong, China

**Rissho Kosei-kai Friends in Shanghai**

Please contact Rissho Kosei-kai International

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Ulaanbaatar**

(Address) 15F Express Tower, Peace avenue, khoro-1, Chingeltei district,  
Ulaanbaatar 15160, Mongolia

(Mail) POBox 1364, Ulaanbaatar-15160, Mongolia  
TEL: 976-70006960 Email: rkkmongolia@yahoo.co.jp

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Erdenet**

Please contact Rissho Kosei-kai International

**Rissho Kosei-kai di Roma**

Via Torino, 29, 00184 Roma, Italia  
TEL/FAX: 39-06-48913949 Email: roma@rk-euro.org

Please contact Rissho Kosei-kai di Roma

**Rissho Kosei-kai di Venezia**

**Rissho Kosei-kai of Paris**

**Rissho Kosei-kai of the UK**

29 Ashbourne Road, London W5 3ED, UK  
TEL: 44-20-8933-3247 Email: info@rkuk.org URL: <https://www.rkuk.org>  
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/rkuk.official>  
Twitter: [https://twitter.com/rkuk\\_official](https://twitter.com/rkuk_official)  
Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/rkuk\\_official](https://www.instagram.com/rkuk_official)  
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**Rissho Kosei-kai International Buddhist Congregation (IBC)**

〒 166-8537 東京都杉並区和田 2-7-1 普門メディアセンター 3F  
Fumon Media Center 3F, 2-7-1 Wada, Suginami-ku, Tokyo 166-8537, Japan  
TEL: 03-5341-1230 FAX: 03-5341-1224 URL: <https://www.ibt-rk.org>