



## Rissho Kosei-kai of Kolkata Celebrates the Completion of the New Dharma Center Building

### Living the Lotus Vol. 213 (June 2023)

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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.





## Turn Your Mind Toward Seasonal Customs

Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

### Refining Your Sensitivity Through Contact with Nature

Whether we live in a large city or small rural town, the workings of nature are always with us. In my youth, I lived for about ten years in Suganuma, Niigata Prefecture; when winter came the snow fell, and as summer approached we planted rice, so our lives were always in sync with nature. As I was just a child, I helped with the farm work and looked forward to events such as Bon dances and festivals at the village shrine.

No matter how much time passes, the natural phenomena and customs associated with the four seasons are always intricately connected to our lives, although we are apt to forget how important those connections are. In a big city, we have fewer opportunities to watch the flowers and insects vibrantly announce the arrival of the seasons or to marvel at the beauty created by nature.

The poet William Wordsworth (1770–1850) wrote these words in “The Rainbow”:

My heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky:  
So was it when my life began;  
So is it now I am a man;  
So be it when I shall grow old,  
Or let me die!

Why does Wordsworth go so far as to say that there is no point in living if one loses a sense of admiration and awe for nature? As if in reply to this question, the biologist Rachel Carson (1907–64) wrote, in *The Sense of Wonder*: “Those who dwell . . . among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life. Whatever the vexations and concerns of their personal lives, their thoughts can find paths that lead to inner contentment and to renewed excitement in living. Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts” (1965, Harper & Row).

As Wordsworth wrote, the secret to maintaining your youth and vitality lies in a daily life of never forgetting the innocent feelings of childhood, being inspired by the workings of nature, and marveling at nature's wonders.

### Nature Is Quietly Putting Forth the Truth

Rachel Carson's words also tell us that we can overcome suffering and sadness if we have the sensitivity that allows us to see something beautiful or wondrous and feel inspired by its beauty or magnificence. Refined sensitivity stimulates the functioning of a flexible mind that finds a way to be liberated from suffering and helps you stay energetic for all of your days.

Come to think of it, nature never says a word of complaint while quietly showing us how things should be and, by supporting many lives, keeping the whole world alive. In other words, nature is quietly putting forth the truth. The metabolic regeneration of our physical bodies can also be seen as one of the ways that nature is putting forth the truth. Therefore, being aware of the workings of nature—the workings of truth—may even bring us peace of mind and liberation.

For example, imagine if the inspiration of coming into contact with the beauty of the earth could lead our minds to think about the miraculous existence of this planet earth, and the workings of each and every form of life that lives here. In that case, everyone would realize that what matters most on this planet is not attacking or fighting with others, but giving praise for each other's lives, wouldn't they? Such a realization puts your mind at ease.

In keeping with this idea, why not try gazing at the stars or looking at the flowers at your feet, especially with a young child who is full of sensitivity? Of course, even while at home, you can come in contact with seasonal customs and the workings of nature. Doing so means refining your sensitivity and at the same time, enjoying, savoring, and discussing the workings of the truth with people who will witness the era to come. I think this is also an important bodhisattva practice that contributes to the future by nurturing young minds and fostering humanity.

From *Kosei*, June 2023



# Spiritual Journey

## The Merit I Gained from the Support of My Beloved Family

Mrs. Deepshikha Mutsuddi  
Rissho Kosei-kai of Kolkata

*This Dharma Journey talk was delivered during the congratulatory ceremony for the completion of the new building and enshrinement of the focus of devotion at the Kolkata Dharma Center in India on March 19, 2023.*

**E**TERNAL Buddha Shakyamuni, Founder Niwano, please guide me. President Niwano, please guide me.

Distinguished guests, members of the sanga, and all those in attendance, please accept my sincere congratulations on this occasion of the completion of the new building and enshrinement of the focus of devotion. It is truly an honor to join you all in celebrating this joyous event. And I thank you so much for giving me an opportunity to share my Dharma journey on this auspicious day.

I was born the only daughter of my late father Seababrata Mutsuddi and my mother Dipti Mutsuddi in Kolkata on March 6, 1983. My family has never been wealthy. From the time I was very little, my mother went through a lot of hardship. Even so, she raised me with great love. During my father's lifetime as well as after his passing, my mother worked tirelessly to afford my education. Thanks to her support, I could pursue graduate studies and obtain a master's degree. After finishing graduate school, I took a teaching job at a public school at the recommendation of my mother, who used to be a teacher.

Currently, I work as a professor of geography at a public university. I have come this far thanks to the support of a great many people. I cannot fully express how much my mother, in particular, has done for my education thus far. Also, I must express my gratitude to my husband, Sarbamitra Chaudhuri, for his assistance. I got married at the age of twenty-seven and was blessed to become a mother at thirty-five. Without the support of my devoted husband, I wouldn't have achieved the happiness I have now.

I became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai in 2017.

My encounter with Rissho Kosei-kai was the biggest turning point in my life. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Anup Barua, who is my Dharma parent.

When I walked into the entrance on the day I visited the Dharma center for the very first time, Rev. Shumon Barua, who currently serves as an assistant minister in India, took my shoes and put them in the shoe cupboard for me. That surprised me because usually leaders of organizations do not do such things. Later, when I went to fetch water, I accidentally spilled some on the floor. Rev. Barua immediately went to get a rag and said, "Thanks to the spilled water, I can wipe the floor and clean the area around it." He wiped not only the water spread on the floor but also the area around the spilled water. When he noticed how astounded I was to see him doing this, Rev. Barua responded, "I am just practicing the teachings of Founder Niwano and also President Niwano."



*Mrs. Mutsuddi delivering her Dharma Journey talk at the Kolkata Dharma Center.*



He then taught me about the Founder, using the book *The Buddha in Everyone's Heart: Seeking the World of the Lotus Sutra*, written by President-designate Kosho Niwano, which is about the teachings of the Founder. As I listened to Rev. Barua's explanations, I was deeply moved by Founder Niwano's thinking and way of seeing things.

At that moment, I felt I had discovered the secret of why members of Rissho Kosei-kai are such appealing people. Usually, when people become leaders of organizations, they become arrogant and boast about minor achievements as if they had accomplished something significant. This is because arrogance arises within them. However, when I expressed my gratitude for their hospitality, Rissho Kosei-kai leaders replied, "No, not at all. Everything is the work of the Buddha." Although I was already familiar with the Buddhist principle of "nonself," at Rissho Kosei-kai one can learn this teaching not only in words but also through the practice of daily life.

I have gained various insights and merits through practicing Kosei-kai's teachings. Before joining Kosei-kai, I had not heard much about seeing the good side of things or how even inconvenient events can hold important meanings. However, through practice, I learned that adopting such a viewpoint enables us to understand the causes of things.

A few years ago, my relationship with the president of the university where I worked deteriorated for reasons unknown to me. She started using insulting words towards me, and I could only cry while listening to her. Although I had already obtained a doctorate, she refused to issue me the doctoral registration certificate necessary for employment at the university. At that time, I prayed for the situation to improve through sutra recitation, and a few days later, I received the certificate from the president. Back then, there were many people at the university with whom I did not have good relationships, not just the president. For that reason, I had various difficult experiences in those days. Nevertheless, I always tried to practice compassion and forbearance, and I feel this made me kinder to others than before.

I encountered Rissho Kosei-kai during the most challenging period of my life. Perhaps I had

performed some good deeds in a past life that led me to Rissho Kosei-kai. To tell you the truth, my husband and I had difficulty conceiving a child, so we began receiving fertility treatment in 2015. We underwent in vitro fertilization three times, and on the third attempt, we became pregnant with four babies. However, two and a half months later, we had to have an abortion because we couldn't hear their heartbeats. After taking a break from the treatments for a while, we resumed them in August 2017. It was around that time that I joined Rissho Kosei-kai. On New Year's Day in 2018, I brought my mother to join Kosei-kai. It was my second time connecting someone with the Dharma.

Around that time, I began to feel burdened by the physical and mental demands of the fertility treatments, and I consulted with Rev. Barua, telling him, "I no longer have the mental strength to continue with the treatments. I think it's about time we considered adoption." Then, Rev. Barua said, "Connecting others with the Dharma is the highest form of practice in the Lotus Sutra. You will receive the merits of sharing the teachings. Moreover, guiding your mother brings the highest merit, so with a little more patience, your dream will come true."

Shortly thereafter, on February 10, I underwent in vitro fertilization again and became pregnant. At the time, I was a new professor and still in training. However, due to various life-threatening issues faced by both myself and my baby during the pregnancy, I was unable to go to the university.

During my pregnancy, I recited the Kyoten twice a day without fail, and sometimes I selected whole chapters from the Lotus Sutra and recited them along with the Kyoten. Even before entering the operating room for my delivery via Caesarean section, I recited the Kyoten. I learned later that my blood pressure rose to 240 while in the operating room. A substantial blood transfusion is usually required during this type of surgery, so I was worried because my blood type is Rh-negative. There was a possibility that the baby would have a lot of problems.

The newborn was a boy. Despite being born with a low birth weight of 2,000 grams, he was healthy. After the delivery, the attending doctor said, "I was

concerned about your ability to safely deliver, but this is truly miraculous.” During my pregnancy and after giving birth, I did my best to connect others to and enhance their connection with the Dharma. Additionally, through pregnancy and childbirth, I deepened my faith in the Lotus Sutra.

Following the birth of my child, I started attending family education lectures at Rissho Kosei-kai and learned many things about parenting. The first thing I learned was to never resort to corporal punishment and instead communicate with my child in a way that he could understand. Sometimes, when our children exhibit problematic behavior, we may be inclined to hit them on the spot, even in front of others, as a way to stop them from repeating the same behavior in the future. However, this can have a serious negative impact on their mental and physical well-being.

One thing I learned from talking with members and leaders of Rissho Kosei-kai is that if we remain calm and compassionate toward our children, they will be calm and will not act impulsively. I sometimes have trouble reciting the Kyoten properly when I have worries or feel anxious. I have noticed that, at such times, my own instability can affect my son and make him unsettled.

I also learned not to compare myself to others and that the cause of things lies within myself. When I was young, I always compared myself to others and wondered, *Why isn't my life going as smoothly as everyone's? Why do I have to suffer so much?* As I mentioned earlier, my mother had to work very hard to raise me. My father passed away when I was seventeen years old. Around that time, I had back pain, and it worsened to the point that I was unable to walk, forcing me to spend most of my university days bedridden. Despite all of that, with encouragement from my mother, I persevered with my studies and ultimately graduated from university. However, I continued to face physical, mental, and financial difficulties, which often left me feeling that no matter how hard I tried, I was never rewarded.

For a few months before and after my marriage, I was again bedridden. But thanks to the support of my mother, husband, and everyone around me, I overcame that challenging situation. The difficulties

continued even after I joined Rissho Kosei-kai, but thanks to the teachings and members of the sangha, my heart began to lighten.

As I walked on the path of faith, I realized one more thing. When something bad happens, blaming others or blaming ourselves alone will not allow us to follow the right path. Practicing the faith taught me that it's important not to be conceited when good things happen, and that we must also learn from our mistakes when bad things happen. If we want to experience the joy of being appreciated, we must be willing to accept criticism and view things objectively.

Through the difficult experiences at my workplace in the university, I learned that it's important to face humiliation with a bodhisattva's accepting heart and forbearance, and to make efforts to preserve harmony. I also learned that as long as I continue to practice forbearance, the actions of those who try to hurt me will cease all by themselves.

The confidence I gained from such experiences has been a great help in my decision-making. Although I am an educator, speaking in public outside of the university classroom, such as in seminars or workshops, always made me nervous since I was not accustomed to it. During the lockdown caused by COVID-19, I had the opportunity to participate in Kosei-kai's online *hoza*, or “Dharma circle,” and through that experience, I improved my confidence with public speaking. Even if I am asked to speak suddenly and without preparation, I can now respond immediately. In the past, I used to feel very nervous and lacked confidence in my judgment when forced to make a decision, so I would often agonize over decisions. Even though I thought I was handling everything well at work and on various other occasions, deep down, I always wanted someone to be by my side. However, those fears and anxieties have become a thing of the past. I have learned the importance of trusting myself without relying on others. I feel happy when my decisions lead to good outcomes, but I make sure not to become full of myself. On the other hand, when I get a bad result, I can now readily acknowledge my mistake without blaming others. I have gained this confidence thanks to the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai.

I vow to devote myself to the following from now on:

1. I will strive to maintain a smile in every situation. I will be diligent so that I can make my own face like the smiling faces of the Founder and the President.

2. I was deeply moved when I saw the video of Cofounder Myoko Naganuma, our compassionate mother-in-the-faith. Despite being ill, she always smiled and treated others kindly. In the same way as her, I will diligently follow the bodhisattva way and nurture my buddha nature.

3. I will always maintain a mind of compassion for those with whom I haven't been able to build good relationships and those who dislike me, whether they are close-by or far away. I believe that those people treat me harshly because they may be dealing with their own suffering and hardships, and so I will hold compassion toward them. I pray that peace may come to their hearts so that they can find happiness even if they are harsh with me.

4. In daily life, I will strive to eliminate both small and large attachments. It may seem trivial, but I think many people hand over old bills of currency instead of clean ones when paying for something. I started practicing letting go of this small attachment by using

clean bills in monetary transactions. I also try not to be bothered when someone hands me an old bill. Through this little practice of giving clean bills to others instead of keeping them for myself, I realized one thing: if you let go of small attachments, you will receive great joy in return.

5. I will devote myself to helping those around me and discovering the good in all people—their buddha nature. Material pleasures do not last long, and as soon as one desire is fulfilled, another arises without our knowledge. I believe that true happiness can only be attained through the path of faith. Therefore, I will strive to spread the joy that I have gained from my faith to others.

6. I want to have a heart that deeply understands the suffering of people and other living beings, so I will strive to maintain a compassionate mind toward them.

7. I feel very fortunate to have joined Rissho Kosei-kai. I am grateful for the difficult times and events in my life that led me to encounter this teaching. If everything had gone the way I wanted, I may never have thought of walking the path of faith. Looking back on my life so far, I am convinced that good things always await us on the far side of every



*Mrs. Mutsuddi with fellow Rissho Kosei-kai members, following the enshrinement ceremony for the focus of devotion at her parents' home.*



bad event. If we understand the true reality of things, together we can make ourselves and others happy.

8. Understanding the suffering of others and helping them attain true happiness is the highest joy of faith. The smiles of all of you who are gathered here today for the inauguration ceremony of Rissho Kosei-kai's Kolkata Dharma Center serve as proof of this. The Lotus Sutra repeatedly emphasizes that the Buddha's teachings lead all people to happiness by removing their sorrows, cause joy to arise in everyone's heart when hearing the Dharma, and reveal buddha nature in all people.

I am truly grateful to have participated in today's ceremony. This is the fruition of the long-cherished aspirations, prayers, and unwavering efforts of the members of Rissho Kosei-kai's Kolkata Dharma Center, as well as the support of the headquarters and various branches of Rissho Kosei-kai.

I express my sincere gratitude to Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, Founder Niwano, Cofounder Naganuma, President Niwano, distinguished guests, responsible members and Dharma teachers of the Kolkata Dharma Center, members of the sangha, and all members of Rissho Kosei-kai around the world. Thanks to the many ways in which you generously supported us, we obtained the Buddha's arrangement for the inauguration of our new *dojo*. Once again, I express my gratitude to all of you and conclude my talk. Thank you very much for listening.



*Mrs. Mutsuddi at the enshrinement ceremony for the focus of devotion at Mrs. Ronita's home.*



# An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

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

### Applying Broad-Mindedness: Forbearance

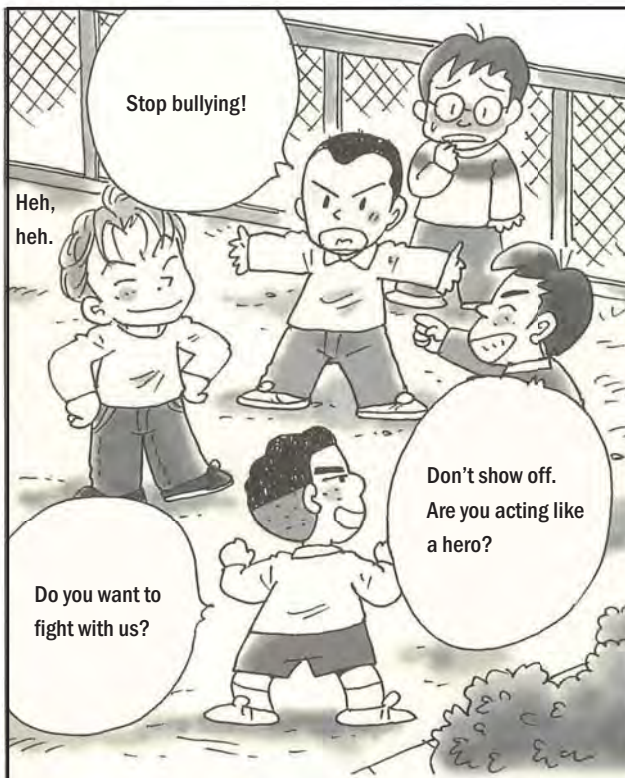
Forbearance means forgiving others with a tolerant mind instead of getting angry or showing off.

For example, when you do good for others voluntarily, some people may make fun of you, saying “You are acting cool!” At such times, it is important to sustain your good intention without getting angry or feeling embarrassed. It is also necessary to encourage yourself and maintain your effort when your lazy mind appears.

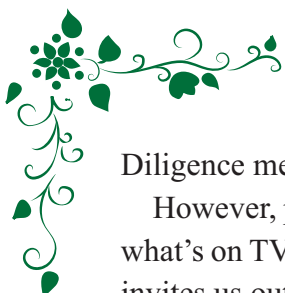
Practicing forbearance means not only enduring something but also constantly pursuing self-improvement.

#### Did You Know?

Forbearance indicates not only bearing something, but also being willing to accept an inconvenient situation or a person you dislike; the term forbearance can refer to tolerance.





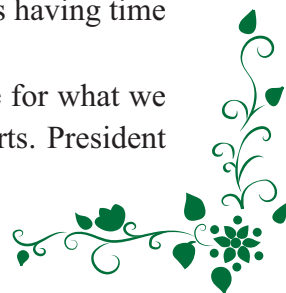


## Walking the Path Single-Mindedly: Diligence

Diligence means continuing to perform good deeds without backtracking.

However, practicing it is very difficult—though we make up our minds to study, we are tempted by what’s on TV or a video game, so we can’t concentrate on studying. It also happens that when a friend invites us out to play, we tend to feel like going out. But if we play all the time, we miss having time to study.

It is important to concentrate on what we should do right now. Let us set a schedule for what we plan to do every day, such as studying, doing after school activities, and playing sports. President Niwano teaches us that we should practice diligence without haste and without pause.



### Did You Know?

President Niwano explains about diligence as follows: “We would like to practice diligence with a resolution to repeat good deeds with completely sincere hearts, and what’s more, we should keep doing so until we feel joy in the practice.”







# Germinating the Seeds of Awakening

## Chapter 1 Living by Aspiring: Your Point of Departure

### You Were Born to Become a Buddha (3)

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano  
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



#### Everyone Can Become a Buddha Without Exception

In the “Parable of the Conjured City” chapter of the Lotus Sutra it says, “The Buddha Way is long and far,” but looking at your devotion to practice, I have the feeling that it might not be such a long journey after all. This is because a great many of you have nearly reached the level of a bodhisattva who puts the liberation of others before their own happiness, and a lot of you are about one step away from becoming buddhas!

For this reason, it is important for each and every one of us to interact with people in true sincerity as children of the Buddha, to always be mindful of the happiness of others, and to be devoted to bodhisattva practice. When we eliminate the suffering of others, bring them joy, and guide them to the Way of true happiness, we move closer to becoming buddhas with every step.

In the “Skillful Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha emphatically teaches us that “Of those who hear the Dharma, / None will fail to become a buddha.” That is to say, everyone who hears this teaching can become a buddha, without exception. This is because we were born to become buddhas, and that’s why we are now following the Way to become buddhas.



The Buddha's aspiration is that we all become buddhas, but for our part, we human beings vow to acquire the wisdom and compassion of a buddha. When the Buddha's vow and our vows match perfectly, then without a doubt, the promise that not a single person will fail to become a buddha is fulfilled.

I may sound repetitive, but it is the Buddha's original vow that everyone, without the omission of one single person, becomes a buddha. I, too, wish only that all of you devote yourselves to bodhisattva practice in order to travel straight ahead on the Way to becoming a buddha.

*Bodai no me o okosashimu* (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 28–29





# Director's Column



## The Mind of a Bodhisattva Nurtured by Nature

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa

Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

I WOULD like to extend my greetings to all the readers of this column. This month, we received another insightful hint from the President on how to bring enthusiasm to our practice of diligence. He pointed out to us that being mindful of seasonal customs and the workings of nature is consistent with the bodhisattva way.

After reading the Dharma talk, what comes to mind is the rich, seasonal feeling of the snowy region I experienced in my sensitive teenage years. I realize that my own sensibility was nurtured and polished by coming into contact with nature. Now that I am in my sixties and have already entered the second half of my life, I am once again aware that my familiarity with and awe of nature, which I developed in my childhood, still live on in my daily behavior and values.

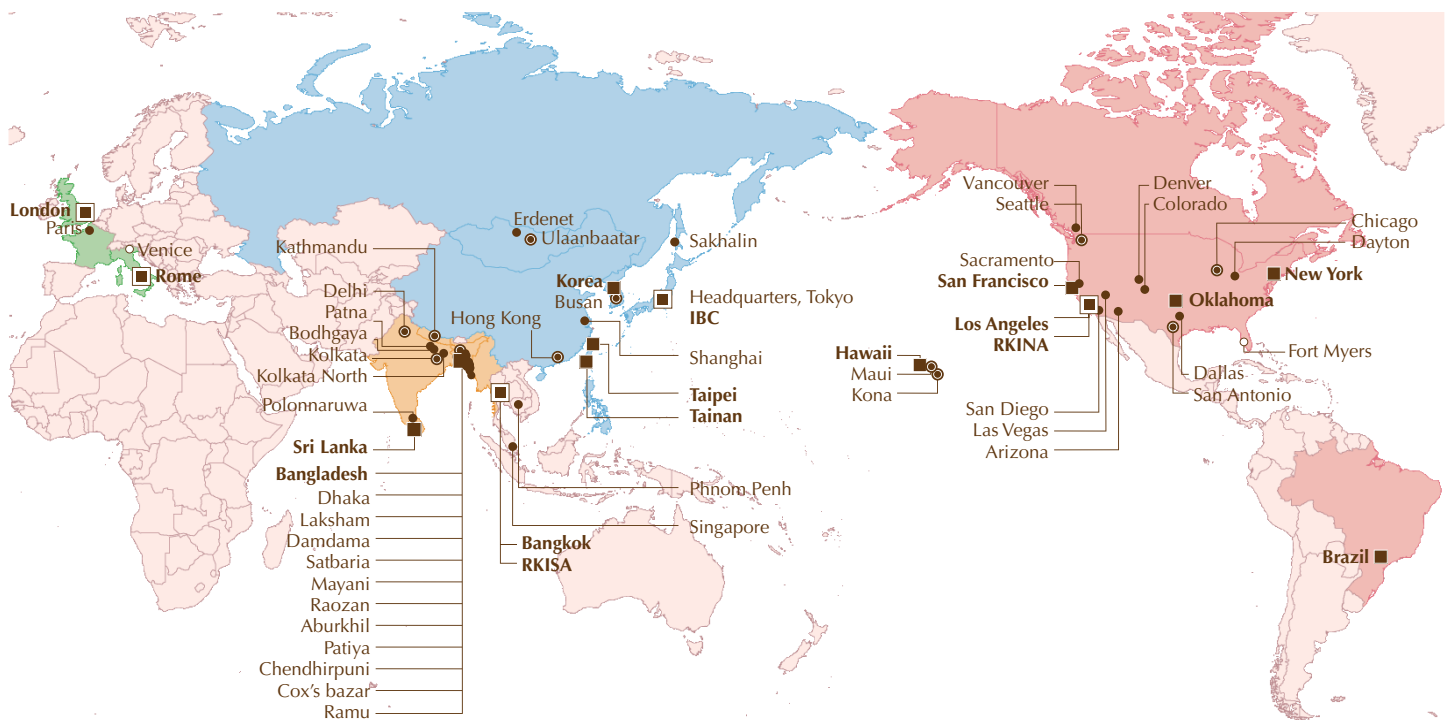
I want to overcome the clashes between our petty egos that unfold in society and regain a peaceful state of mind, following the example of nature, which is always quietly putting forth the truth.

Let us put more effort into sharing the Dharma wherever we are now, with the hope that we will meet more and more companions with whom we can enjoy, savor, and talk about the workings of the truth all over the world.





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