

# Living the Lotus 7

*Buddhism in Everyday Life* 2023  
VOL. 214



## Living the Lotus Vol. 214 (July 2023)

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*Living the Lotus* is published monthly by Rissho Kosei-kai International, Fumon Media Center 3F, 2-7-1 Wada, Suginami-ku, Tokyo 166-8537, Japan.  
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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.



## Food That Nurtures the Body and the Mind

Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



### The Four Kinds of Food in Buddhism

We eat in order to live. By doing so, we absorb nutrients that keep our bodies and minds functioning.

Overeating is a different matter, however, and one that Shakyamuni strictly rebuked in the Dhammapada: “Sluggish fools, who like to gorge themselves and go to sleep, wallow in their beds like pigs that have guzzled down slop.” Shakyamuni teaches us to “eat in moderation and not overeat,” as Buddhism places importance on gratefully receiving moderately portioned meals. That kind of gratitude helps us become good at not wasting the ingredients brought to us by myriad karmic connections and leads to the mind of revering life.

Another distinctive feature of Buddhism is its view that food, which keeps the body and mind healthy, is not limited to food and drink consumed through the mouth.

If this is the case, what other things, besides those we eat and drink, are called “food” in Buddhism?

One item is called “the food of information,” which our bodies and minds receive through the six sense organs—the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Depending on how we receive information, it can either increase the mind of desire and the mind of anger or become nourishment that cultivates a tranquil mind. Another item is the intention and will that thinks “I want to do that” or “I wish I could be like this,” which is called “the food of volition.” Just as positive actions are born from positive intentions, our minds and actions change depending on what kind of intentions and motivations we have. In addition to these two things, another form of food for the mind is “the food of consciousness,” which is rooted in experience and customs, as well as consciousness based on knowledge handed down to us from our ancestors.

When we add the food we eat to the three foods just described (information, volition, and consciousness), we call them “the four kinds of food” in Buddhism. The Buddhist point of view is that we exist thanks to the food we eat that makes up our bodies, in addition to the



food that develops our minds with the various types of information and sensations perceived through our bodies and minds.

The Verse of Five Contemplations, which is chanted before meals in Zen and other schools of Buddhism, ends with the phrase “In order to accomplish the Way, I now receive this food.” Of course, here the word “food” refers to food and drink that help maintain a healthy body. But if we interpret this in light of “the four kinds of food,” in order to be a human being capable of always showing consideration for others, it is absolutely important that we consume good quality “food” that helps maintain a healthy mind.

### In Everything We Do, We Need Balance

Because we care about our physical health, we avoid eating things that are bad for our bodies. Similarly, the things we should—and should not—consume, for the sake of a healthy mind, are important. So what do you think those things are? Let’s think about what we see, hear, and talk about on a daily basis that upsets our minds, and what kind of people, words, and sights we encounter that makes us feel at ease.

Masaharu Taniguchi (1893–1985), the founder of the Japanese new religion Seicho-No-Ie, wrote, “Eating should be the most solemn ceremony of making an offering to the god dwelling inside yourself.” To put this in Buddhist terms, the “food” that brings out the buddha nature in yourself and others—namely, words full of gratitude and consideration and kind deeds that comfort people—is food for the mind that helps you live a better life as a human being.

However, in reality, we may say or be spoken to with words that fuel our minds with anger and hatred, and we may also be stimulated by information that increases our desires. Therefore, in order to prevent, as much as possible, the poisons of excessive desire and self-centered viewpoints from entering our bodies and minds, it is important that we exercise the same care with food for the mind as we do with the food we eat, being moderate and balanced in everything we do, regardless of whether we like it.

Human beings have the privilege of living in health and happiness, rather than merely living. Shakyamuni demonstrated this fact in the best sense when he said, “Truth (teaching the Dharma) is the sweetest nectar of all drinks, and people who live according to clear wisdom are said to lead the best lives.” By learning the teachings of the Buddha, sharing them with others, and living with gratitude for everything we receive, we can lead healthy and happy lives. We can say that one example of fostering such lives is the moment when we put our hands together reverently and say *itadakimasu*, “I gratefully receive this meal,” before we eat.

From *Kosei*, July 2023



# Spiritual Journey

## The Joy I Received Through Ancestor Appreciation

Ms. Oyun Gavaa  
Rissho Kosei-kai of Ulaanbaatar

*This Dharma Journey talk was presented on June 10, 2023,  
at the ceremony for the nineteenth anniversary of the Ulaanbaatar Chapter's foundation.*

**H**ELLO, everyone. My name is Oyun Gavaa. I was born in 1956 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and I am sixty-seven years old. My husband passed away from disease at the young age of thirty-nine in 1995. Since then, I have raised my three daughters on my own and done everything I could do to ensure that they would graduate from university and become independent. Thankfully, they all have graduated from university and are now married and living with their families. I am now also blessed with six grandchildren.

I studied architectural engineering at university and graduated in 1979. In the forty-four years since graduation, I have been working as an architectural

engineer. After working for several government-led and private companies, I decided to start my own architectural consulting firm in 2002, and I have been running the business ever since.

My second daughter, Altanzul Batbayar, had a daughter who was diagnosed with cancer in 2010. Despite all treatment efforts, she passed away just one year later. Altanzul abandoned herself to grief over the loss, and she sometimes lost consciousness and went into convulsions. She went to see a doctor and was diagnosed with epilepsy, and she received a disability certificate at the age of thirty-five. Altanzul gradually became unable to continue her work due to her deteriorating mental condition. Seeing this, I was also in deep sorrow and despair.

In 2013, I had a chance to learn about Rissho Kosei-kai through Ms. Nyamdavaa Baasan, who was also an architectural engineer. Since I was in deep sorrow about my daughter's disease, I started visiting the Ulaanbaatar Chapter of Rissho Kosei-kai of Mongolia soon after I got Ms. Baasan's invitation. I participated in sutra recitation and attended *hoza*, the "Dharma circle," at the chapter. However, because I had grown up under socialism, I distrusted religion, so I did not soon become a member.

As I was a manager at my workplace, I couldn't talk about my sufferings with others, and at home, I tried not to burden my children with my worries. In addition, since I had lost my husband long ago and had no one to share my innermost feelings with, it was a fresh experience for me to see, during *hoza* sessions, sangha members talk about their struggles, shed tears, and share the joy of liberation. Gradually, I also became able to share my own sufferings in



*Ms. Gavaa delivers her Dharma Journey talk during the ceremony celebrating the nineteenth anniversary of the Ulaanbaatar Chapter's foundation.*

*hoza*, and in 2015, I decided to formally join Rissho Kosei-kai.

On October 15, 2016, I had the *Gohonzon*, our “focus of devotion,” enshrined at my home altar, and I could perform sutra recitation at home. At that time, my second daughter’s family was also living with me, so she joined me for sutra recitation and also became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai. After she began to practice sutra recitation, she regained her mental stability, and she went into convulsions less often than before. Later on, she safely gave birth to a baby, and in 2019, she gradually began to go back to her work.

I was eager to learn more about the teachings, hoping to turn my eyes toward the cause of suffering, and I began to actively participate in training programs at the chapter. I aspired not only to study the teachings for my own personal growth but also to share what I have learned with others and practice the bodhisattva way. With this in mind, I strove to practice the three types of generosity—donating material wealth, the Dharma, and physical labor.

The first opportunity for me to visit the headquarters of Rissho Kosei-kai in Tokyo was on May 29, 2016, when I attended the ceremony for the 110th anniversary of the birth of Founder Nikkyo Niwano at the Great Sacred Hall and the fourth World Sangha Assembly with its main venue at the Horin-kaku Guest Hall. Through this visit, I learned that Rissho Kosei-kai is also an organization actively working for world peace.

On October 20 and 21, 2018, I participated in the Presentation Ceremony of Dharma Teacher Qualification at the Great Sacred Hall. During those two days, I received the Dharma Teacher certificate, and, in the presence of the Buddha, I made a vow to dedicate myself further to the happiness of others.

On May 26, 2019, I received a statue of the headquarters-bestowed *Gohonzon* during the Presentation Ceremony of the *Gohonzon*.

In December of the same year, I was assigned as an area leader. Over the four years since then, I have dedicated myself to the bodhisattva practice, working together with sangha members in my area to organize chapter events, perform the Dharma duties at the chapter, and invite more people to the circle of the

sangha. Thanks to the Buddha’s protection and the guidance of the sangha, I have been able to connect twelve people with the Dharma up to the present moment.

Soon after one of the new members joined Rissho Kosei-kai, I arranged a ceremony to enshrine the locally-bestowed *Gohonzon* at her home altar. I explained to her the significance of receiving the posthumous names for ancestors and performing ancestor appreciation. She received the posthumous names for her ancestors and others who had been close to her, for a total of seventeen people. That member had long been in poor health, but after she began to practice ancestor appreciation, her health improved, and her daughter, who was in her thirties, got married and was blessed with children.

What I think is most important in disseminating the teachings is to let people know the significance of posthumous names and ancestor appreciation. At first, I did not fully understand the meaning of them, so I actively participated in training programs. I learned about the significance of posthumous names and the ways to apply for and enshrine them at the altar. Thanks to this training, on behalf of my family and relatives, I have received posthumous names for twenty-two individuals—three generations of my ancestors, my parents-in-law, my husband, his relatives, as well as miscarried children of some relatives. I now offer sutra recitation for them with deep reverence.

In 2021 and 2022, I arranged to receive posthumous names of three generations of ancestors for my two sons-in-law, as well as the ancestors of members in my dissemination area—for a total of forty-four individuals. I created an online group with my relatives to offer sutra recitation for our ancestors. Every month, for twenty-two days, we perform ancestor-appreciation services, which are followed by *hoza* sessions.

Through the practice of ancestor appreciation, I overcame two serious health problems. The first problem was a torn right rotator cuff, which was discovered in November 2019. Fortunately, on April 7 of the following year, I underwent successful surgery to repair it and made a full recovery.

# Spiritual Journey

The second was the three brain aneurysms that were found in November 2022. On February 3 of this year, I underwent surgery. Thankfully, the operation was a success, and I experienced no serious complications. According to the doctor, I was on the verge of suffering a cerebral hemorrhage. I believe the early detection was thanks to the Buddha's protection. When I informed Ms. Zorigmaa Shuger, leader of the Ulaanbaatar Chapter, and my Dharma parent, Ms. Baasan, about the upcoming surgery, they advised me to offer sutra recitation in sincere hope for the peace of mind of the doctors and nurses in charge of the surgery, the happiness of their families, and the success of the surgery.

I researched the names of the doctors and nurses and recited the sutra with the sangha members at the chapter. Around that time, the Ulaanbaatar Chapter was conducting an online midwinter sutra recitation practice. Even after being hospitalized, I participated in the online sutra recitation practice every day.

On February 3, the last day of the midwinter sutra recitation practice, I participated in the sutra recitation from my hospital bed, and I recited the Sutra of the Method for Contemplating the Bodhisattva Universal Sage, known as the closing sutra of the Threefold Lotus Sutra. Ten minutes after the recitation ended, I was brought into the operating room. Before the surgery, the doctor had informed me that it would be difficult to remove all three brain aneurysms in a single surgery, and that I would need to have two more surgeries. However, during this surgery, which lasted eight hours, all aneurysms were successfully removed. My daughters, in the waiting room, were very anxious as the surgery lasted longer than they had been told it would. They told me later that during the operation they had single-mindedly offered sutra recitation, praying for the success of the surgery. Thanks to their prayers, the surgery concluded successfully, and my postsurgical condition has been good.

I would like to continue my efforts to connect more people with the Dharma and enhance my fellow members' connection with the Dharma. I will also dedicate myself to nurturing young people who will carry the future of the sangha. I will share with

sangha members the merits I have experienced through the practice of the three types of generosity.

Furthermore, as a Dharma teacher, I would like to deepen my understanding of the significance of posthumous names and the ritual etiquettes of Rissho Kosei-kai and share my knowledge with other sangha members in Mongolia.

As a member of Rissho Kosei-kai, I have experienced a number of positive turning points. Among them, what I treasure most are my encounters with the amazing sangha members, who always pray for my good health and happiness and share with me both joys and sorrows. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to President Nichiko Niwano, Ms. Shuger, Ms. Baasan, and all sangha members for having guided me and supported me on this wonderful spiritual journey.

Thank you so much for your kind attention.



*Ms. Gavaa participates in hoza.*

# An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

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

### Keeping an Unshakable State of Mind: Meditation

Meditation is having an undistracted mind that is focused toward a goal. It is better known as *zen* or *zenjo*, its proper and full Sino-Japanese translation.

*Zen* indicates “a serene and unshakable state of mind,” and *jo* means “the state of being calm.”

While it is good to push on toward one’s goal, it is important to always turn our minds to the teachings of the Buddha with an unwavering, undisturbed, calm mind, no matter what may happen.



#### Did You Know?

The term we use in Japanese Buddhism is *sanmai*, which has the same meaning as *zenjo*. *Sanmai* derives from *samadhi* in Sanskrit. It refers to a state of consciousness in which our minds remain peaceful and unmoving by fully focusing on a specific object.



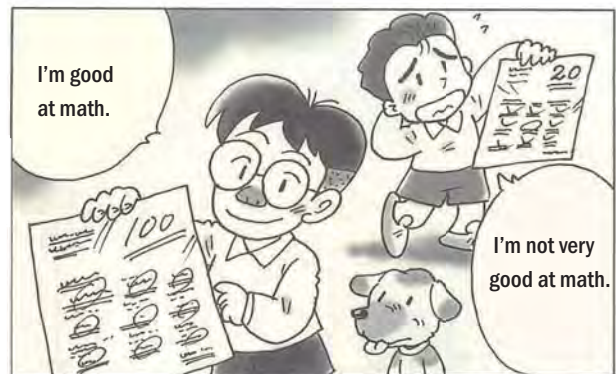
## Attaining the Power to Discern the True Nature of Things: Wisdom

We attain *chie* [智慧], meaning “wisdom,” through cultivating the spiritual practices of the other five paramitas that we have learned about in previous issues. Wisdom is the power to discern the true form of all things.

The kanji character *chi* [智] refers to discernment, while the other character, *e* [慧], refers to the ability to see the true nature of things.

For example, if you get along with your friend by acknowledging their individual traits as well as the characteristics you have in common, you can truly become best friends and not fight.

It is also important to accept each other, respect each other’s personality, and cooperate with each other.



### Did You Know?

*Chie* has two kanji characters that can mean “knowledge” or “wisdom”: one is 知恵 and the other is 智慧. 知恵 means the knowledge or intellectual understanding that we accomplish through learning and the insight we obtain through experience. 智慧 refers to supreme knowledge and our ability to distinguish between the faults and virtues of things.





## Chapter 1

Living by Aspiring: Your Point of Departure

# Everything in the World Is a Manifestation of the Buddha (1)

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano  
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



### **Revealing the Knowledge and Insight of the Buddhas**

The purpose for which the buddhas appear in the world is said to be the One Great Cause. To be specific, this is to “open,” or reveal the knowledge and insight of the buddhas to us, demonstrate it to us, awaken us to it, and finally, encourage us to embark on the Way of the knowledge and insight of the buddhas. This is what the Lotus Sutra calls Opening, Demonstrating, Realizing, and Embarking.

Simply put, Opening the knowledge and insight of the buddhas means the buddhas show us our buddha nature. Then, by demonstrating how to see everything through the



wisdom and insight of the buddhas, they lead us to realize supreme joy. Furthermore, this joy encourages us to embark on the Way that leads to the Buddha, which entails entering the path of living life in the right way. These endeavors make up the One Great Cause of the buddhas' appearance in the world.

Related to this is a teaching about the nature of our human minds that is called the “mutual inclusion of the ten realms.” First of all, “ten realms” refers to ten levels within our minds. Second, at the lowest levels are the six realms of delusion: the realm of hells (a mind of anger), the realm of hungry spirits (a mind of desire), the realm of beasts (a mind of ignorance), the realm of asuras (a mind of jealousy), the realm of human beings (a mind of all of these states existing in balance), and the realm of heavenly beings (a mind of worldly bliss). Third, above these are the four realms of awakening: the realm of shravakas (a mind that awakens through following the teachings), the realm of pratyekabuddhas (a mind that awakens by experiencing truth for oneself), the realm of bodhisattvas (a mind that awakens by liberating others), and the realm of buddhas (the mind of Supreme Perfect Awakening). Lastly, the “mutual inclusion of the ten realms” means each of these realms (minds) also has all the other nine within it.

Depending on the current state of our minds, we may experience the realm of hells or the realm of bodhisattvas within our hearts. This illustrates that everything is dependent on the state of our minds and thus demonstrates how a single thought has boundless potential to expand infinitely.

The wisdom of the buddhas perceives all the changes in the world according to this principle. If we understand how the state of our minds influences everything, we can expand the warmhearted encounters we have with others by aspiring to have the frame of mind that always puts others first.

In the Lotus Sutra's “A Parable” chapter, the Buddha says: “Now this threefold world / Is all my domain, / And the living beings in it / Are all my children.” The Buddha said to us: “You are all my children.” We are given the gift of life and sustained by the Buddha. The Buddha is a parent to us, and so all living things in this world are our siblings.

Shakyamuni Buddha's One Great Cause for appearing in the world was to convey this message to everyone and awaken in them gratitude for having been given the gift of life and having their lives sustained. The One Great Cause also refers to the role and responsibility of each and every one of us.

In Risho Kosei-kai, we place great importance on taking care of our parents and appreciating our ancestors. Since all living things are brought into existence by one great life, our ancestors are also buddhas, and everything around us is a manifestation of the Buddha. Taking care of our parents and performing ancestor appreciation are practices to help us to discover this and deepen our gratitude.

*Bodai no me o okosashimu* (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 29–31

# Director's Column



## The Practice That Makes People Happy and Healthy

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa

Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

**H**ELLO, everyone. July has arrived. In Japan, where there are four distinct seasons, we are in the full swing of summer.

This month, we received the monthly message from President Nichiko Niwano on the theme of “Food That Nurtures the Body and the Mind.” Every month, from a different angle, the President explains to us the wisdom of cheerfully practicing the teachings. I look forward to his monthly messages, and every time I read them, I feel my heart is refreshed. It is always a truly precious opportunity for me.

In his message for this month, President Niwano touches upon “the four kinds of food” in Buddhism: (1) the food we eat and drink, (2) “the food of information,” which our bodies and minds receive through the six senses, (3) “the food of volition,” which consists of our intention and will, and (4) “the food of consciousness,” which is rooted in experience and customs, as well as consciousness based on knowledge handed down to us from our ancestors. He emphasizes that it is our privilege as human beings to lead healthy and happy lives with the nutrients we receive from the four kinds of food in Buddhism. The phrase “lead healthy and happy lives” reminds me of the motto “Practice for health and happiness” presented by Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

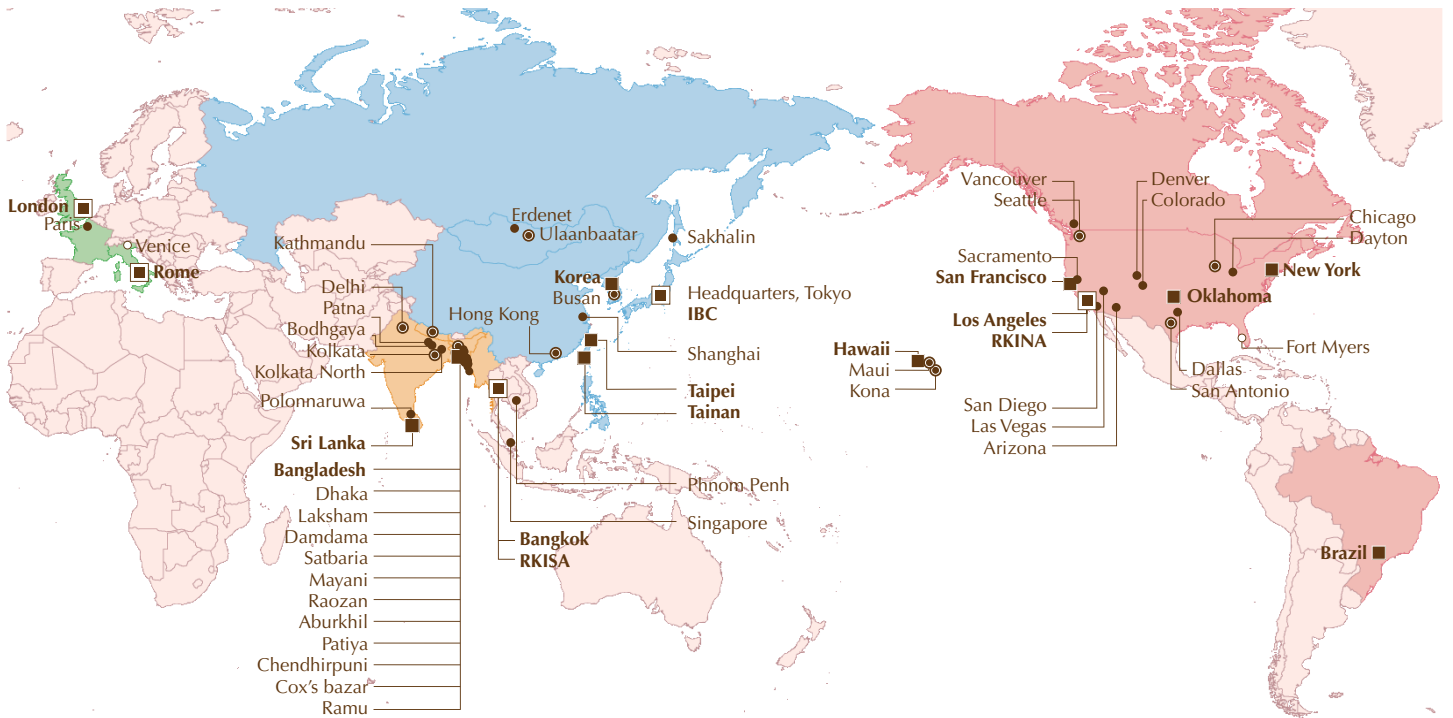
The Dhammapada (160) teaches that the self is our only protector, or our sole refuge. Buddhism also indicates that each of us is a primary cause of interdependent origination. With this awareness in mind and through introspection, we should perform our roles in making our world—the realm of interdependent origination—a place where people can lead healthy and happy lives.

The President’s message is a reminder for us to recognize afresh this important challenge and renew our determination to continue our diligent practice.





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