

Living the Lotus 9

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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Rissho Kosei-kai of Taipei

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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.



Greed Is a Source of Troubles

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

Greedy Desire Beckons Disaster

As noted by the Chinese poet Du Shenyan (645–708), autumn is a time “of skies clear and blue, and horses growing stout.” Autumn is also said to be the season of a good appetite. It is a blessing that as the heat eases up, our appetites increase, and we can relish everything we eat. Of course, we should try to remember moderation so that we do not regret overeating.

If you have a good appetite and are worried about gaining a little weight, you should be able to lose it by reducing the amount you eat, but to use Shakyamuni’s expression, “People who greedily pursue their various worldly desires are beaten down by many delusions and trampled on by danger and disaster,” which tells us how much damage strong desires, such as greed, do to our bodies and minds. Indeed, people who are too greedy will be “trampled on by danger and disaster,” which is hardly a trifling matter.

According to this passage from the Sutta Nipata, because people have a “greedy desire for their fields and houses; [men,] women, and relatives; and various other things,” their obsessions with excessive desire for money and assets, as well as love and affection, give rise to envy, anger, and hatred of themselves and others, and that is the source of falling prey to the disaster we call “trouble.” Another possibility is that disaster takes the form of the stress of being shunned by people who think you are greedy, which can affect your physical health.

Shakyamuni also said, “When people who give rise to greed are unable to fulfill their desires, they worry and suffer as though they were shot by arrows.” In his own day, Shakyamuni must have actually seen and heard about people who were suffering like this and there may have been those who at times suffered the “disaster” of being harmed violently because their excessive greed made them constantly fight with others around them. Shakyamuni must have felt firsthand that people who greedily pursued their desires were quite remote from a healthy lifestyle and had nothing but suffering lying in wait for them.

We human beings are said to be social animals, but unlike other animals that do not eat more than they need, sometimes we are unable to hold our desires in check. Therefore, it is essential that in the spirit of benefiting others, we practice daily diligence in order to keep our desires moderate.

The Happiness of Enjoying Satisfaction

It is not a bad thing, though, that we human beings have desires. Shakyamuni had the great desire to liberate all people from suffering. Grounded in the mind of compassion and benefiting others, he pursued this great desire and finally revealed the Truth, or the Dharma, that brings happiness to everyone. Of course, this same desire of Shakyamuni's is embedded in our lives and has become the wellspring for developing and improving humanity.

When greed is out of control, however, it turns into delusions that become troubles and worries. People suffer when things do not happen as they wish, and they are tormented all the more by suffering if, in order to satisfy themselves, their recklessness damages their personal relationships. To prevent this from happening, Buddhism teaches us the importance of “having little desire and knowing satisfaction”—that is, knowing how to keep our desires in check. If we can put this teaching into practice, we can avoid the physical and mental pain caused by unbridled desires. But even though we know this, we cannot always do it.

Therefore, I would like to mention another phrase, “small desires and knowing satisfaction,” in which the word “little” is changed to “small.” The impression it gives is almost the same as “having little desire and knowing satisfaction,” but according to the Pali meaning of the words corresponding to “small desires” and “knowing satisfaction,” the phrase “small desires and knowing satisfaction” means something like “being happy with the necessary and sufficient amount.” The Chinese Buddhist scholar and translator Xuanzang (602–664), known in Japan as Sanzo Hoshi, had a profound grasp of the meaning of “knowing satisfaction,” which he rephrased as “enjoying satisfaction”—in other words, to be satisfied is to be happy. If you know that happiness means satisfying the necessary and sufficient amount of your desire, you will want to experience the joy of being satisfied, and then you will naturally be able to control your desire. Moreover, because this is easier to accept than being told to know what it means to be satisfied, you can relax and control your desires, can't you?

Most of all, I believe there is no healthier, happier way to live than being happy with the necessary and sufficient amount of anything in life.

From *Kosei*, September 2023



Spiritual Journey

The Merit Received through Revering Buddha Nature

Mr. Percy Wijeratne
Rissho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka

*This Dharma Journey talk was delivered on June 4, 2023,
during the ceremony marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka.*

HELLO, everyone. I would like to begin by thanking everyone for the opportunity to share my Dharma Journey during this ceremony marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka.

My name is Percy Wijeratne. I was born on August 21, 1961, which currently makes me sixty-two years old. At the age of nineteen, I began working for a company that specializes in government projects. Later, when I turned thirty, I married my wife Renuka Jayanthi, and we have been blessed with a wonderful daughter.

In 1997, one of my colleagues lost his son in a train accident. Our company made the decision to organize a funeral to support the grieving family, and I became responsible for the funeral arrangements. Regrettably, my colleague, consumed by grief, tragically took his own life shortly after the funeral. Once again, I found myself entrusted with orchestrating the funeral for him.

In the aftermath, another colleague, who was knowledgeable about fortune-telling, mentioned that their deaths seemed to align with the indications of their horoscopes. This observation piqued my interest in horoscopes, and I began studying them. The teacher who taught me about horoscopes also possessed a deep knowledge of Buddhism, so I started learning the teachings of the Buddha through him as well.

Mr. Sunanda Thilakarathna, a fellow student in the horoscopes class at that time, was a Rissho Kosei-kai member. Through his guidance, I joined Kosei-kai in 1998. Over the past twenty-five years, the teachings of Founder Niwano have become an indispensable part of my life.

Shortly after becoming a member, I had the chance to learn the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai for the very first time from Rev. Masatoshi Shimamura, who is the director of Rissho Kosei-kai International of South Asia. Later on, I also had the privilege of learning the teachings from many Japanese leaders. Moreover, as part of the headquarters-organized overseas leadership programs, I was given the opportunity to participate in training in Japan at the Mitaka Dharma Center, the Funabashi Dharma Center, and the Kasukabe Dharma Center.

In 2009, the Sri Lanka chapter was elevated to the status of a Dharma center, and Rev. Yoshiaki Yamamoto assumed office as the first minister. At that time, I was experiencing some issues in my relationships. I believed I was always right, wanted people to listen to me, and argued with someone almost every day. In my family, I thought I was the most important person and didn't pay attention to the opinions of my wife and daughter.



Mr. Wijeratne (third person from the left) gives greetings during the hoza (Dharma circle) after the ceremony held on a Poya Day (a lunar monthly Buddhist holiday of Uposatha) at the Sri Lankan Dharma Center on April 5, 2023.

So, Rev. Yamamoto guided me, arrogant person that I was, with these words: “Please believe that there is buddha nature in your heart. Also, believe that the same buddha nature exists in the hearts of everyone else, and please revere it.” Furthermore, he taught me that every phenomenon around us is a teaching of the Buddha.

In 2016, I retired from the company where I had worked for thirty-five years and began serving at Rissho Kosei-kai as a staff member. While working alongside Rev. Yamamoto and fulfilling my role at the Dharma center, my life underwent significant changes. By consistently valuing gratitude, flexibility, and perseverance, as well as by believing in and revering the buddha nature in the hearts of my family and fellow sangha members, I felt my own buddha nature developing.

In 2019, Rev. Yamamoto retired, and Rev. Hironobu Suzuki succeeded to the position. Rev. Suzuki upholds three principles: (1) punctuality, (2) organization and tidiness, and (3) proper greetings. While maintaining punctuality presents a challenge for me, I am committed to achieving it through my daily practice.

Rev. Suzuki taught me to value each and every member. By doing so, I gained their trust, and, above all, I learned to trust them.

Rather than merely providing instructions to others and getting things done, I came to take the lead and act myself. That experience made me realize that following this path can steer life in a more positive direction.

In 2020, when my wife underwent cancer surgery, members of the sangha visited the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy and the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi tree in Anuradhapura, offering prayers for the success of the surgery. Additionally, the daughter of a sangha member worked as a doctor in the cancer ward and provided us with a lot of advice. Through my wife’s illness, I believe that the Buddha taught me the preciousness of the sangha and the merits of revering buddha nature. From Rev. Suzuki, I learned

that no matter how unfavorable a phenomenon appears to be, it can be turned in a positive direction.

Three years ago, due to the spread of COVID-19, a nationwide stay-at-home order was issued, and members could no longer gather at the Dharma center. In response, Rev. Suzuki launched a new service through social media called “Breeze from Sri Lanka” and began delivering Founder Niwano’s Dharma messages to the members every day. This practice has continued and has reached over one thousand posts. Through Rev. Suzuki’s example, I learned the significance of consistency. I also learned the importance of fulfilling one’s role diligently, as I observed Rev. Suzuki’s dedicated efforts to fulfill his to the best of his ability, even amid the unfavorable circumstances of the pandemic.

Rev. Suzuki not only cleans the Dharma center premises but also sweeps the roads around it once a week. Following his example, I will also clean the Dharma center with all my heart while diligently working on punctuality. Furthermore, I vow daily to revere the buddha nature of every person I interact with and to practice the teachings of the Buddha with a mind of gratitude.

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to share my Dharma talk.



Mr. Wijeratne serves in the role of recitation leader at a family hoza. In Sri Lanka, many members’ homes are designated as dissemination bases (family hoza) to support dissemination activities.

An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

The Lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Teachings of Buddhism

The Ultimate Reality of All Things

The Lotus Sutra teaches the importance of seeing the true nature of all things. This true nature of all things is called the ultimate reality of all things.

When we face various occurrences, we judge them based on our own outlooks.

Imagine that we find a big stone in our way when we are walking down the street. Most of us would think “It’s in the way.”

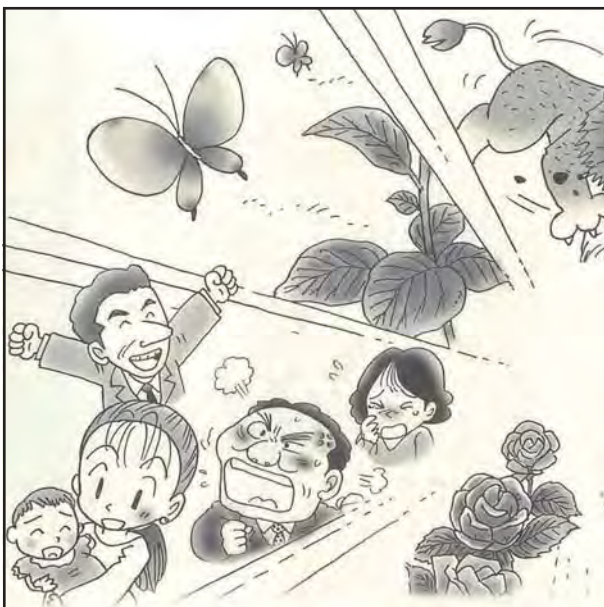
However, seen through the Buddha’s eyes, the truth is that the big stone just stands there, existing where it fell. It exists neither to cause trouble to human beings nor to bring them misfortune. In other words, such a thought as “It is in the way” is nothing more than our perspective as humans.

As this example shows, we tend to judge things based on our preconceptions as well as our likes and dislikes. When we view an object through such an outlook, the true nature of the object becomes invisible.

The Lotus Sutra teaches that in order to see the true nature of things, it is important to view people, things, and events as they are.

Did You Know?

There is a phrase in chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra, “Skillful Means,” that reads: “Only a buddha together with a buddha can fathom the ultimate reality of all things.” It teaches us the importance of viewing all things without preconceived notions.



The Parable of the Burning House

There are seven parables in the Lotus Sutra, which the Buddha uses to explain different religious principles. All together, they are called “the Seven Parables of the Lotus Sutra.”

The parables illustrate the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, which are considered to be difficult to understand, using a variety of stories. The first parable that appears in the sutra is the Parable of the Burning House. The story is as follows:

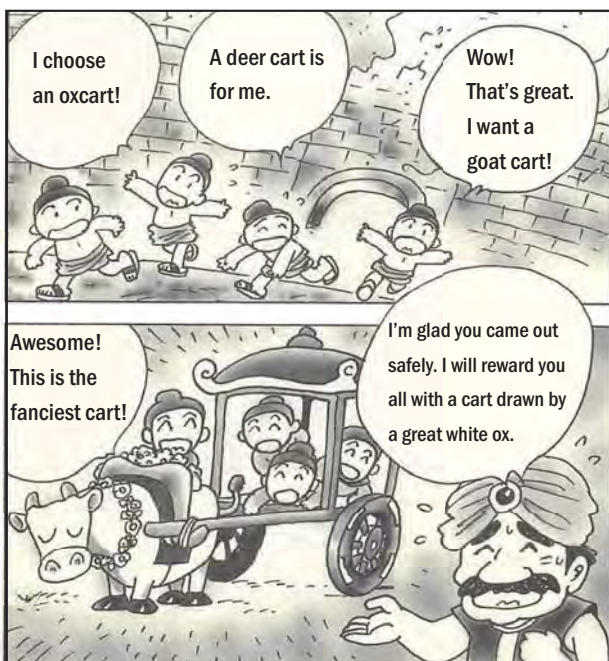
In a certain country, a wealthy elder resides in an old and decaying house. The house catches on fire with all his children playing inside. The elder calls to them, urging them to leave the burning house, but they are too absorbed in their play to listen to his warnings.

So he tells the children that if they go outside, they will find a goat-drawn cart, a deer-drawn cart, and an ox-drawn cart that he will give them to play with. Such rare playthings being just what they have always wanted, the children rush outside to the great joy of the elder, who gives each of the children a much larger and fancier cart drawn by a great white ox.

The wealthy elder represents the Buddha; the children represent us; the elder’s decayed house symbolizes this world in which we are attached to things; the fire describes all kinds of suffering; and the three different types of cart represent each of the three vehicles to becoming a buddha: the shravaka, the pratyekabuddha, and the bodhisattva. This parable describes how the Buddha skillfully leads us—because we tend to indulge our desires—to the truth, through his wisdom and compassion.

Did You Know?

The three vehicles are symbolized by a goat-drawn cart, a deer-drawn cart, and an ox-drawn cart. This means that there are three kinds of practices for becoming a buddha: the shravaka, the pratyekabuddha, and the bodhisattva. In the story in chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra, “A Parable,” the foremost teaching is that the Buddha treats all people who are on the path to becoming a buddha equally, giving them a cart drawn by a great white ox regardless of the kind of practice they perform.





Chapter 1
Living by Aspiring: Your Point of Departure

**Everything in the World
Is a Manifestation of the Buddha
(3)**

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai





Of Those Who Hear the Dharma, None Will Fail to Become a Buddha

If you are surrounded by companions who have faith and trust in the Lotus Sutra, you'll never be at a loss for what to do. Hearing the experiences and wisdom of those many people allows you to cope with problems that you would not be able to resolve on your own, because you learn to accept that the purpose of every encounter is to reveal your buddha nature.

The Buddha's original vow is to make all people buddhas. I founded Rissho Kosei-kai because I was bolstered by this, the One Great Cause for the buddhas' appearance in the world. And Kosei-kai is supported by the sincere hearts and minds of many people. I believe all our members are true children of the Buddha when, one person leading another, they guide those close to them onto the path of the Dharma.

When the number of people around you who, forgetting themselves, can naturally act for the sake of others increases by even one or two, the significance of the sutra's words "Of those who hear the Dharma, / None will fail to become a buddha" approaches a tangible reality for you.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), p. 34



Director's Column



The Joy of Knowing Satisfaction

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa

Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

HELLO everyone. In this month's message, President Nichiko Niwano addresses the issue of "greedy desires" that we all inherently possess. "Desire" itself can do both good and harm depending on how we treat it, but I believe that all of us have experienced moments when our desires got out of control and caused trouble or suffering.

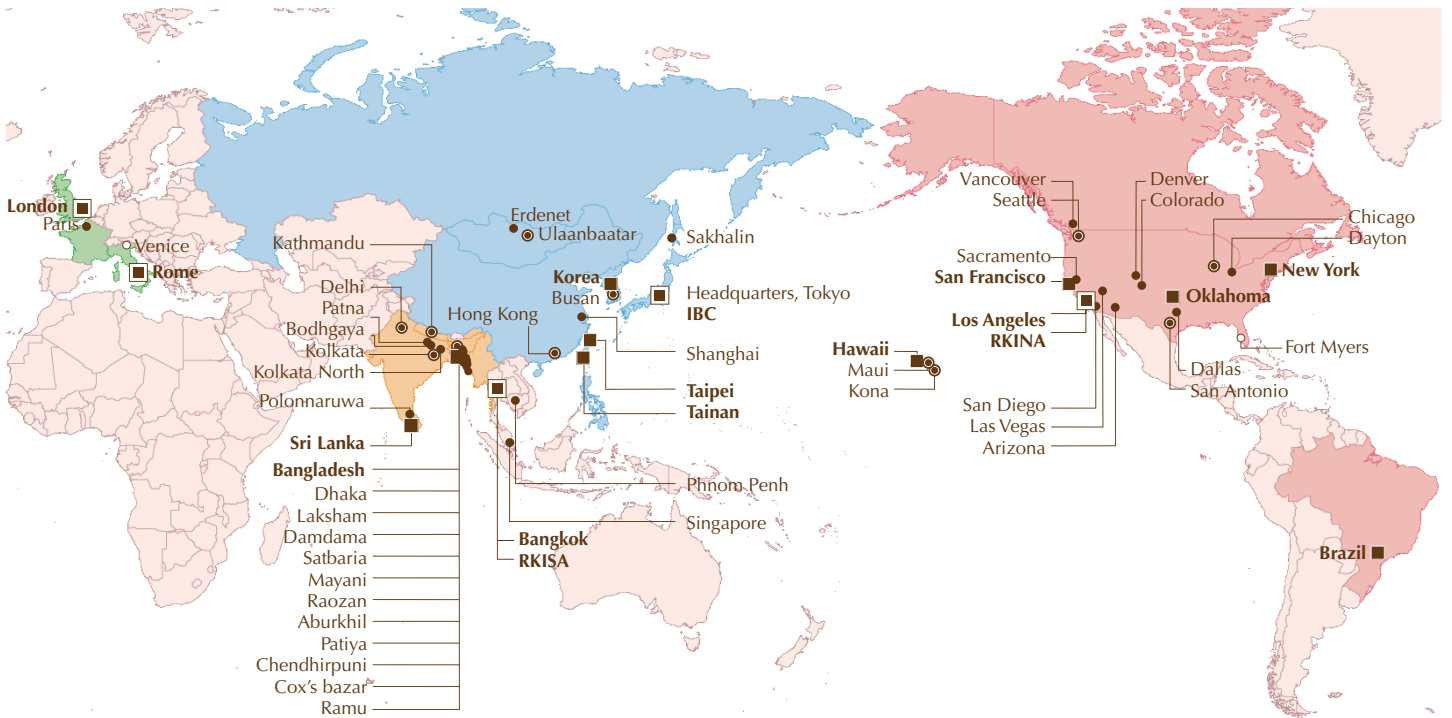
In his message, in addition to the well-known Buddhist adage "Having little desire and knowing satisfaction," President Niwano introduces two other intriguing concepts: "Having small desires and knowing satisfaction" and "To be satisfied is to be happy." I felt an urge to experience just such a moment in my daily life; a moment in which the joy of knowing satisfaction fills me with a true sense of happiness. As I read this month's message, I renewed my gratitude for the karmic connection with Rissho Kosei-kai and my encounters with my lifelong teachers: Founder Niwano and President Niwano. The message also reignited my desire to seek the joy of practicing the teachings together with my fellow sangha members, while continuing our efforts to approach the essence of Buddhism through the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

The ten epithets of the Buddha that describe the Buddha's virtues and powers include "Expert Trainer," which means one who never fails to control evil and lead people to awakening. I would like to continue my diligent practice so that I may always maintain an altruistic mind and control my desires.





🌸 *A Global Buddhist Movement* 🌸



Information about
local Dharma centers

