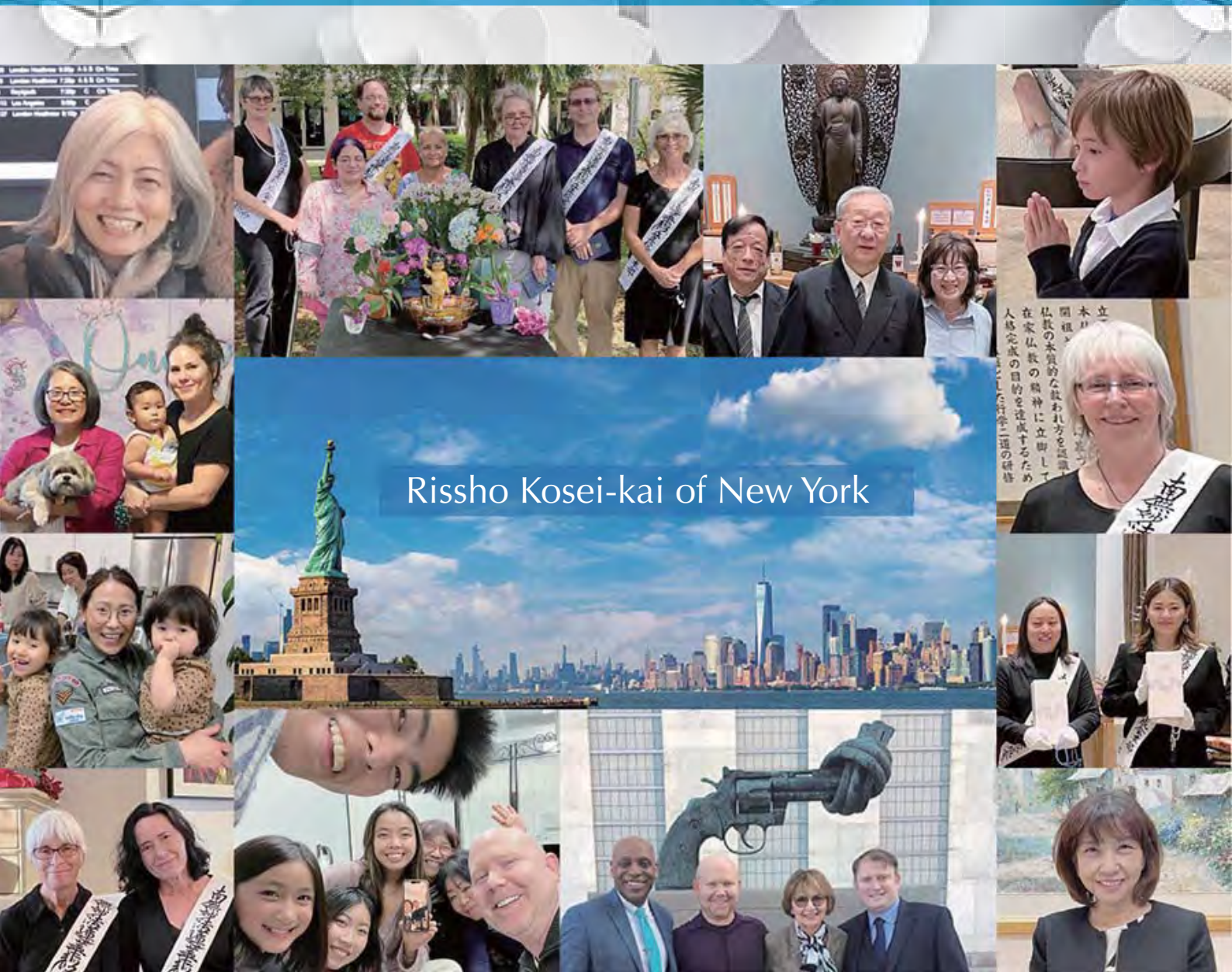


Living the Lotus 10

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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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.



Anger Harms Both Mind and Body

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

How Should We Suppress Anger?

Greed, anger, and ignorance, according to Buddhism, are three delusions that poison the human mind. They are also said to affect the body as well as the mind. More specifically, it is scientifically proven that anger—feelings of rage, hatred, and resentment—has an adverse effect on the body.

Getting angry disturbs the balance of the autonomic nervous system, causing an increase in heart rate and blood pressure that in turn worsens blood flow and heightens the possibility of arrhythmia, heart attack, and stroke. In other words, someone who tends to get angry is at great risk of contracting serious health conditions and medical emergencies. The Native American Hopi Tribe has a saying, “Do not allow anger to poison you,” which succinctly tells us that our feelings of anger harm ourselves.

The real nature of anger is self-centered and based on the small ego that gets angry when things do not go as you wish, you are mistreated by other people, or you envy or resent someone. According to Shakyamuni, that anger is “more intense than a raging fire,” harming one’s own body and mind as well as the bodies and minds of others.

However, as the phrase “righteous indignation” suggests, at times anger can come from the desire to improve our country or society and motivate us to take action that helps many people.

Therefore, it is important that, instead of trying to get rid of our feelings of anger, we learn how to control them.

When people experience anger, it seems to take a few seconds for the brain to start functioning to cool the anger off. Anger peaks six seconds after you get upset, and during that time, you can suppress the anger by shifting your mental focus to something else. In previous issues, I have mentioned several methods of calming anger, and they are all actions that take about six seconds. For instance, when you get mad, try slowly taking a deep breath and holding it for a moment to slow down your breathing, or try chanting a Shingon mantra-like phrase to yourself, *on niko niko hara tatsumaizoya sowaka*, which means

“Smile, don’t lose your temper, *svāhā*.” By knowing how to use these simple and effective ways to control anger, I hope you will be able to spend every day with a smile on your face.

Receiving Virtue from “Losing”

“The Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World as Universal Gateway,” chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, says that “If those with much hate-filled anger always keep in mind and revere the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World, they will be freed from their anger.” That is, in the moment you feel angry, by calling to mind the Regarder of Sounds, you will be able to turn toward the buddha within you and realize that you are one with the Buddha, so your anger will subside by itself.

Even so, once anger has been ignited, how do you quell its raging flames? How can we deal with the phenomenon of getting angry so that we free ourselves from the anger that arises from our decisions about what is advantageous and disadvantageous to ourselves, or free ourselves from our attachments to pride and avoid doing physical and mental damage to ourselves and others?

The *I Ching*, or *The Book of Changes*, contains a teaching called “Lose like a mountain stream.” We usually think of losing as something disagreeable, but in this case, the word “lose” means to be humble or to give in; in other words, it means to feel satisfaction from being considerate of other people and putting them first. The mountain stream described cuts across the foot of a mountain, and the deeper the stream, the higher and more beautiful the mountain looks. This passage from the *I Ching* teaches us that although it may seem as though we are “losing” something when we suppress our anger and desire by taking some hardship upon ourselves to help someone else, doing so increases our own virtue. Simply stated, such “losing” brings us joy and peace of mind. Even following the principle of weighing advantages and disadvantages, it is still much healthier, both physically and mentally, to accept “losing” and yield to others willingly than to chase after greedy desires with bloodshot eyes. In other words, accepting “losing” is an advantage.

In the past, I have said that the wisdom of a religion that wishes for peace is “to be able to accept losing” in conflicts with other people. Occasionally accepting “losing” can be one form of mentally preparing ourselves so that we are not attacked by anger. This is the wisdom of living together tranquilly.

The name of the Hopi Tribe I mentioned earlier means “peaceful people.” We should all hope for such a way of life.

From *Kosei*, October 2023



Spiritual Journey

Learning the Importance of Self-Transformation

Mr. Joseph Rogel
Rissho Kosei-kai of Seattle

*This Dharma Journey talk was delivered on March 19, 2023,
during the Spring Higan (Equinox) Ceremony at Rissho Kosei-kai of Seattle.*

HELLO, everyone. I am Joseph Rogel. I was born in Seattle, Washington, and I am the youngest of two children. My father was a career military man with twenty years in the US Navy. So, although I've now spent most of my life in the Pacific Northwest, when I was young, our family moved often, living in different parts of California, such as Alameda and San Diego, and living in the Philippines.

My father is a second-generation Filipino American, born in San Francisco. He was the youngest of six children, and the eldest was twenty years his senior. His father and mother separated when he was seven, and he chose to live with his father. He was often left alone for weeks to fend for himself. At seventeen, he joined the US Navy to serve his country. After being stationed all over the world at a young age, he eventually ended up in the Philippines where he met his wife, who was working at the cosmetics counter at the US military exchange. Six months later, they married, when they were both only twenty-one years old. Then they moved to the US.

My father wasn't raised in a religious household. My mother grew up in the Philippines, a devout Catholic country, but her family primarily focused on education with religion taking a back seat. My father was in the Navy, often away from home, and my mother, who had no one to ask for help, was trying to figure out how to live in the US. Religion didn't hold an important position in their lives. But when religion finally came up, we started to attend Catholic church once in a while, and my brother and I occasionally attended Bible school. At church, we were the family that fumbled through the rituals such as knowing when to kneel and when to get up. I

remember my mom gave me Jolly Ranchers just to keep me busy.

When I was in middle school, I asked my mom how religious our family in the Philippines was. Without hesitation, she said, "Religion wasn't the focus of our lives." She told me that people of faith would go to church when someone got sick, passed away, or during the holidays. And now it all made sense.

In college, around 1988, I met the Caluza family—Kim, Kazuyoshi, Rudy, Jimmy, and Keiko. At the time, I didn't know that they were prominent members of Rissho Kosei-kai. Moreover, I was unaware that Keiko Caluza was the founding member of Rissho Kosei-kai of Seattle. I was invited to their family memorial day on the twenty-seventh day of each month and attended my first sutra recitation service, which was all recited in Japanese.



Mr. Rogel delivers his Dharma Journey talk at Rissho Kosei-kai of Seattle.

No one has asked me to become a Buddhist. However, I attended many of the Caluza family memorial days, and as time passed, I quietly became more curious about Buddhism.

In 1990 my grandmother in the Philippines passed away. To attend her funeral, I visited a land where I had not been since I was a child. In my hometown, Olongapo, we bury our deceased in family tombs. Usually, cemeteries are on a hill and away from the water line to avoid flooding.

I remember going to the cemetery with my Auntie Rica and some cousins before the funeral to visit the tombs of our relatives who had passed away since I had emigrated. My Auntie showed me the different names on our family plot and then came across the name of my Uncle June. Auntie told me he had died at age thirty-four, when his wife had just given birth to their child. There were stories of his haunting the family and that he could not rest because he hadn't wanted to go so early. There were also stories that his family forgot him, and only a few members showed up at his funeral.

As we were leaving, I looked at his headstone again and noticed a loose piece of cement on the ground. I took it and put it in my pocket as I thought I would bring it home and pray for him. A few days later, we laid my grandmother to rest, and I was soon back home in Seattle.

Fast forward to the Caluza's next memorial day on the twenty-seventh. I sat quietly in the back but with the piece of my uncle's headstone in my pocket. It was the first time I had sat in a service with intention.

After the service, Keiko Caluza turned around and stood in front of me. She told me that I'd had a visitor. She also told me that the visitor had said he was my uncle and that he was happy I was praying for him.

This was the day I began to describe myself as being Buddhist. I remember the first time I told my mom and dad that I was now Buddhist. They responded, "That's nice." As time went on, I attended Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist study classes at the former location in Seattle. The classes were still unclear to me because there were so few resources for English-speaking members.

Things changed in my life, and Rissho Kosei-kai

became a bit distant. I think it had closed down, and I was left with my beads, some candles, some artifacts, and my *Kyoten*, excerpts from the Threefold Lotus Sutra, which is Rissho Kosei-kai's primary sutra.

From around 1993 until I found the Rissho Kosei-kai of Seattle Buddhist Center again in 2020, I did my best to practice the teachings on my own but found myself living by concepts, not so much by what was written. At this time, I had makeshift altars, any type of incense, pretty much anything that I could get my hands on and remember.

I tried my best to be a Buddhist based on the concepts of cause and effect. Regarding events in my life, if a certain result happened, I always worked backward to see what I had done to receive such an outcome. I had never prayed for what I wanted but prayed to do the right actions. I have to admit that there were lapses because I did not have a place to go to study and practice. It was clear that what seemed to be missing in my life was consistency.

As part of my second encounter with Rissho Kosei-kai, I found the Facebook community and reached out to Rev. Nick Ozuna. As I remember, he invited me to attend, but I didn't go right away. I found many excuses not to go. But one day, I showed up on Zoom. I remember leaving our Zoom meeting and feeling energized about Buddhism—not so much with an energy to practice (not yet at least) but more with an energy to learn.

I started to attend activities in person and haven't really looked back. The consistency I had longed for was now in front of me. Since then, it's changed my life so much with work, relationships, and just how I feel about myself.

Since I've rejoined Rissho Kosei-kai, I believe the biggest change in my life has been understanding that I can't change others and can only change myself. If I change myself, others will treat me differently, and I can obtain better outcomes. In *hoza*, or Dharma circles, I've referred to getting frustrated while driving to the point that I honk my horn. It's such a petty example but really a profound statement about how I need to change the way I view my surroundings. Rissho Kosei-kai has empowered me to accept my faults and understand that I can work to be a better person.

Spiritual Journey

A few years ago, when I had just started attending services at Rissho Kosei-kai again, I was struggling with some challenges at work. It was not that I couldn't do my job, but I didn't believe I'd received an appropriate evaluation from the current leadership. Deciding that I would look for a new position, I interviewed with a past vice president I had known, and she offered me a principal position. In the moment, I accepted the offer and planned to start in a month. However, something didn't feel right. I started wondering if the problem was me and the way I looked at myself, instead of how others looked at me.

At service, Rev. Ozuna talked about someone who quit their job because they didn't like their boss or another worker. Then they got a new job, and the same thing happened. I remember saying to myself "He's talking about me."

I ended up backing out of my new offer and staying with my current company, adopting the mind-

set of working on myself. The result last year was that I ended up with the highest revenue that any technical recruiter had obtained in my company's history.

Almost a year ago, my family had our home ceremony for the enshrinement of the focus of devotion. Up until that point, I'd had makeshift altars, often moving them to different parts of my house. It was an emotional day for me, and I remember Rev. Ozuna visiting my home while other sangha members were joining us on Zoom. Our home altar was a gift to our ancestors and to anyone no longer here with us seeking enlightenment. It's our altar, where we show appreciation to those who came before us.

As a member of Rissho Kosei-kai, I'm here to serve and support fellow sangha members in any way I can. In all, I'm grateful for Rissho Kosei-kai, Rev. Nick Ozuna, and all my sangha members.

Thank you very much for listening.



Mr. Rogel (back row, third from right) with his sangha members after the Ullambana Ceremony held on July 16, 2023, at Rissho Kosei-kai of Seattle.

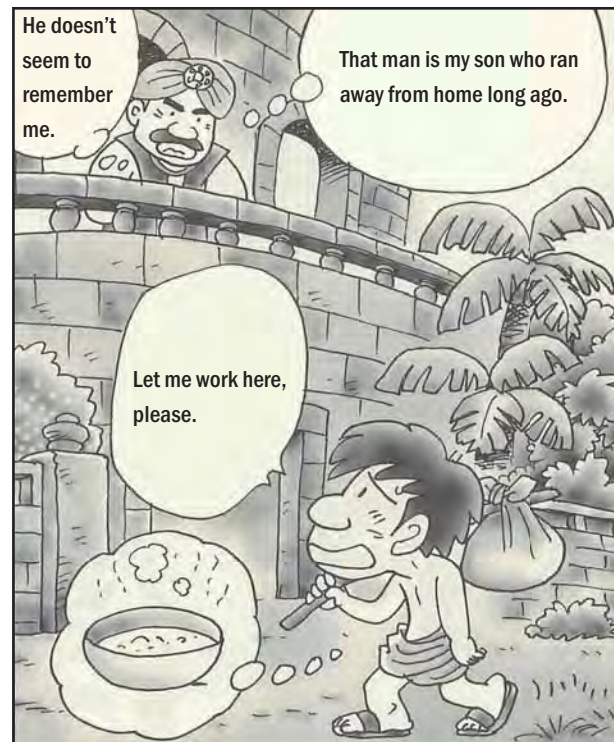
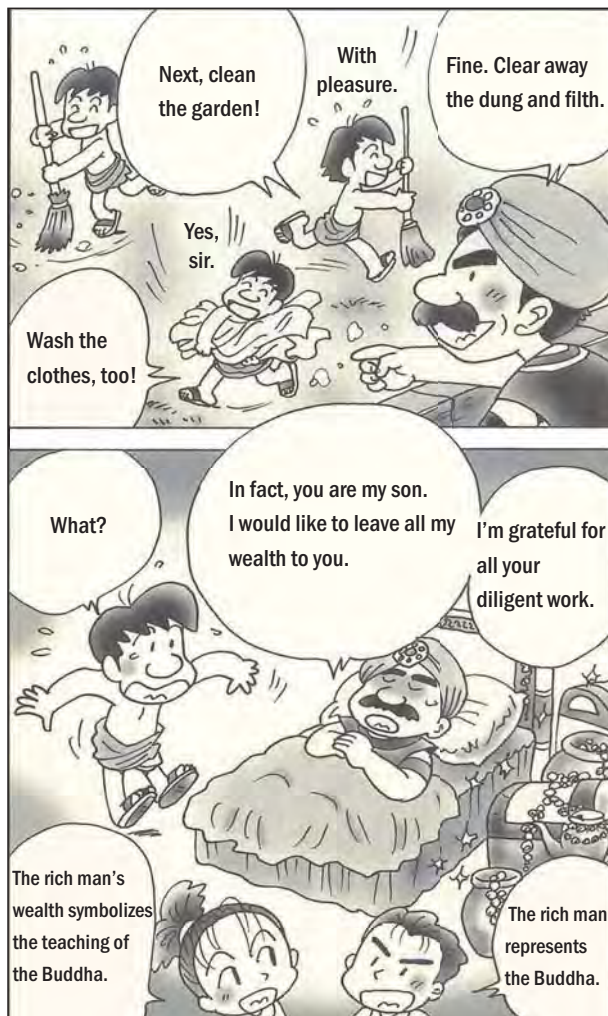
An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

The Lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Teachings of Buddhism

The Parable of the Rich Father and the Poor Son

A boy ran away from home, only to grow up to live a life of desperate poverty, moving from place to place in search of menial work. Meanwhile, his father, who had become extremely rich, still searched for his lost son but could not find him. One day the man accidentally called at his father's house. Though he didn't recognize the rich man as his father, the father instantly knew that the visitor was his son and gave him a cleaning job. The rich man gradually entrusted him with more responsibility and finally appointed him to administrate all his wealth.

A few years later, the father, aware that the end of his life was near, called together the people of the town and revealed to them that the poor man was in fact his son, and he would inherit all his wealth. The rich man symbolizes the Buddha, and the poor son represents us. The story tells us that the Buddha is always watching over us and guiding us as his own children.



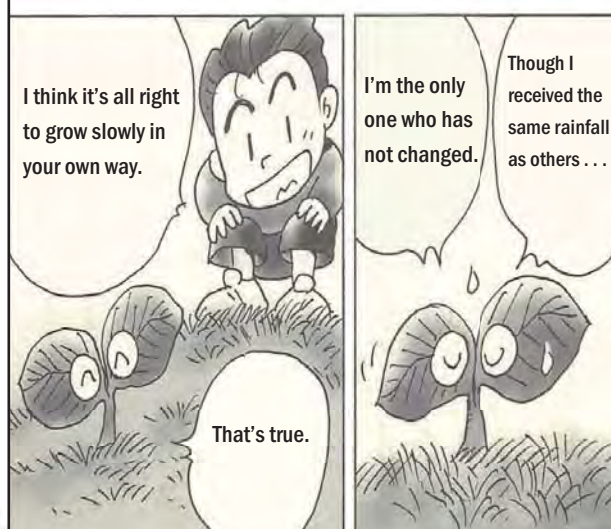
Did You Know?

We may not easily believe that we are all children of the Buddha. However, as this story teaches, the Buddha guides us with compassion so that we realize we are equal. Therefore, we can lead our lives at ease and in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha.

The Parable of the Medicinal Herbs

The rain impartially drenches every plant and tree, making them grow. However, the size, shape, and nature of each plant and tree differ according to its kind. Therefore, even though they receive the blessing of the rain equally, each plant and tree matures at its own speed, grows into a different shape, and blooms with its own unique flowers.

Like plants and trees, we human beings also differ in various aspects—our characters, appearances, body shapes, and circumstances. However, the Buddha shares the teachings with all of us without discrimination, guiding us in ways that are appropriate to each person’s ability to understand.



Did You Know?

This parable appears in chapter 5 of the Lotus Sutra, "The Parable of the Medicinal Herbs." The story teaches that even though each person has their own potential and aptitude, the Buddha teaches the Dharma equally in ways that fit each person’s level of understanding and, eventually, guides all people to attain buddhahood, which is the realm of Truth.



Germinating the Seeds of Awakening

Chapter 1
Living by Aspiring: Your Point of Departure

The Reason You Are Here (1)

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



People Who Bring Joy to Those Around Them

This year (1992), the sumo wrestler Takahanada won the championship in the January Grand Sumo Tournament. He set a historic record for the youngest champion ever by winning the tournament at the age of nineteen years and five months. Everyone was delighted, and I was strongly impressed. However, what impressed me was not just the fact that he has become the youngest champion ever or that his sumo skills outshine those of the average wrestler. I was struck by the powerful aura of his presence.



During his interview, he was humble and unpretentious, giving calm and composed responses, and his demeanor was truly dignified. Even though he is not yet twenty years old, he seems remarkably grounded.

Today's society is so overly affluent that individuals, particularly those of the younger generation, lack any objectives or goals in life, and they seem to lead somewhat frivolous existences. I can't help but feel they have only a weak sense of existing here, in their present circumstances, with any determined purpose.

We are in the habit of thinking of ourselves as people of little consequence. But if you consider this carefully, you'll realize that every type of person who is in this world is necessary to this world, and this is precisely why they exist here and now. If they were unnecessary, they would have never been born into this world in the first place.

In "Skillful Means," the second chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni teaches that "Buddhas, the world-honored ones, appear in the world only because of the One Great Cause." This means, as I always say, the Buddha appeared in this world to make known what the wisdom and compassion of buddhas are like, and to guide all people onto the Buddha Way.

Just like the Buddha's "One Great Cause," there is no doubt that we each have our own important causes for coming into this world. If the word "cause" is difficult to understand in this context, we can alternatively say that each of us has a role to play in this world.

What is that role, that calling? It differs from person to person. The variations are indeed uncountable. However, there are a couple of things that apply to everyone.

The first calling is doing things for the benefit of others. This contribution can be spiritual, or it can be material. It can even be the contribution of your physical labor. In any case, do things for the benefit of others. This is the purpose of your birth in this world, your calling. And by fulfilling this purpose, we constantly stir within our hearts the compassion the Buddha has given us, translating it into action.

The second calling is being a person who brings joy to those around them. If your presence brings joy to those around you, makes them happy and gives them a sense of well-being, then your life is truly what we can consider purposeful. To become such a person, empty your heart and think to yourself "I want to do something to make this or that person happy." This kind of sentiment is your starting point.

And more important than anything else is having the awareness that "I am here because the Buddha brought me into this world."

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 35–37



Director's Column



Audacious Endeavors

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa

Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

LAST month, I had the privilege of taking part in an interfaith-dialogue event—the International Meeting of Prayer for Peace—held in Berlin, Germany, and organized by the Catholic lay group known as the Community of Sant’Egidio. The main theme of the gathering was “The Audacity of Peace,” and the forum I attended focused on “Humanitarian Emergencies of Our Time.”

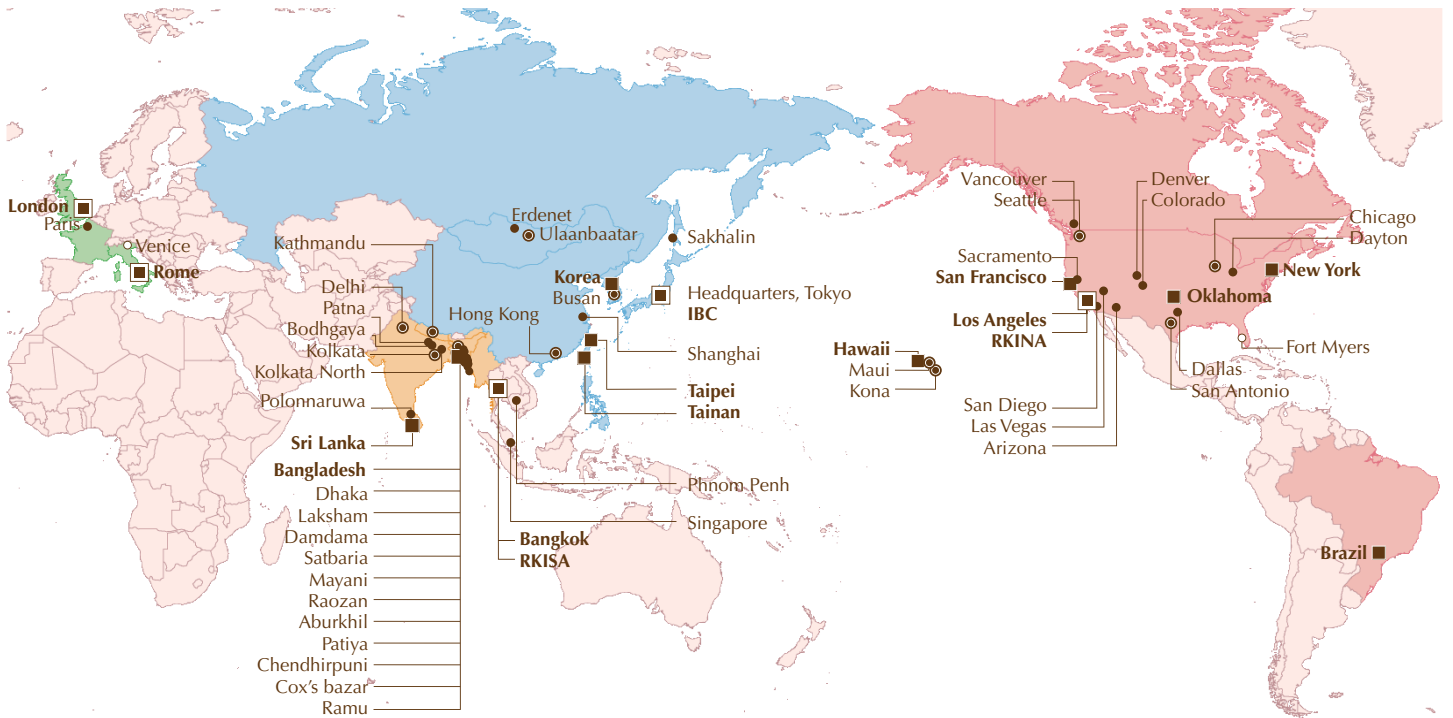
During the forum, I raised two points. First, Shakyamuni Buddha taught about the equality of all humans in the context of ancient Indian society 2,500 years ago, and Founder Niwano advocated for disarmament to the leaders of the US and USSR, as well as other world leaders, during the Cold War at the United Nations’ First Special Session on Disarmament (SSD-I) in 1978. Both of these endeavors were equally audacious. Second, the cessation of human suffering can only be achieved when humanity is liberated from the delusions and attachments that arise from the Three Poisons.

It was such a great opportunity to share the true principles of the Lotus Sutra with people of other religions. The video of my speech will be uploaded soon. Stay tuned!





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