

# Living the Lotus 4

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*Buddhism in Everyday Life*

VOL. 223



**Rissho Kosei-kai  
of Bangladesh**

## **Living the Lotus Vol. 223 (April 2024)**

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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.



## Accepting Things as They Really Are

Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

### What Is Truth?

“Atop the stones of a waterfall, / A bracken has sprouted fiddleheads— / Spring has come.” This poem, written by Prince Shiki (668–716, the seventh son of Emperor Tenji), celebrates the coming of spring, as he has found fresh fiddlehead sprouts at the side of a waterfall flowing vigorously between the rocks. This wonderful poem from the *Manyoshu*, “Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves,” which was compiled during the Nara period (710–794), perfectly conveys even to those of us living today, centuries after the poem was written, the feeling of excitement when spring is in the air.

However, today we have difficulty admiring nature with the clear eyes of people in *Manyoshu* times and joyfully, gratefully accepting things as they really are. Poems like these show us the cloudiness and inadequacy of our own minds.

In a talk recorded in ancient scripture that Shakyamuni had with a brahman, he says, “For me, upholding the truth is like mowing a field of grass.” For Shakyamuni, upholding the truth is the same as the mowing done by a farmhand who cultivates a field. Since this is the case, what does Shakyamuni mean by “the truth,” and what does “upholding it” mean?

When I hear the word “truth,” the first thing that comes to mind is “the true Dharma.” Buddhism places importance on each person’s awakening to the true Dharma, so we can interpret “upholding the truth” as living in accordance with the Dharma. However, in a Buddhist dictionary, the word “truth” has the following definitions: “how things really are” and “things just as they are.” From this perspective, upholding the truth means seeing how things really are—without adding subjective likes and dislikes—and accepting things just as they are. Therefore, I surmise that Shakyamuni must also have been working to cut down the obstructive weeds of delusion before they spread across the field of his mind.

## There Is No Plant with the Name “Weed”

However, delusion can also become the driving force for progress and improvement. As stated by the teaching “Delusions are inseparable from awakening,” we could say that delusion and awakening are ultimately one and the same. If humans are endowed with the power to awaken to the true Dharma precisely because they possess great delusions, then delusions must be blessings that sustain and nurture us. Perhaps no one is more likely to have a major change of heart than someone with great delusions. The reason that Shakyamuni used the expression “mowing grass” in his talk with the brahman is that if we cut down the weeds of delusion that spread across our minds before they become too tall, and continue to plow them into the soil of our minds, we can use them to nourish the wisdom to broaden our minds and make the fields of our minds even richer and more flexible.

Speaking of weeds, there is a well-known story about the pioneering Japanese botanist Tomitaro Makino (1862–1957) admonishing a reporter who had carelessly used the word “weeds,” telling him: “There is no plant in this world with the name ‘weed.’ Every species of plant has a proper name.” And in a similar vein, all the delusions that are compared to the weeds of the mind also have meaning and value. It is up to us to determine whether we let our delusions end as mere delusions, or whether they lead to spiritual growth.

On New Year’s Day, 2024, an earthquake struck Japan’s Noto Peninsula, causing severe damage. We human beings think of earthquakes as nothing other than disasters, but in light of the history of planet Earth, they are just one form of natural phenomena that continues to unfold up to the present day. We could even say that by facing this fact, just as it is, we are participating in an important process that connects natural disasters to human wisdom. Of course, when we see the harsh conditions endured by people affected by a disaster, we cannot accept that reality without becoming emotional; we cannot help but mourn those who have passed away and feel compassion for those whose lives have become difficult.

In the process of facing the truth, accepting it, and suffering as we work through conflicting emotions, we cultivate the wisdom to lead better lives and the mind of compassion that shows consideration for others. This is called our lifelong, diligent practice of the Buddha Way.

From *Kosei*, April 2024





# Interview

## Wishing to Become Someone Who Can Empathize with the Pain of Others

Ms. Choi Ugi  
Rissho Kosei-kai of Korea



### When and how did you become involved in the activities of Rissho Kosei-kai?

My mother joined Rissho Kosei-kai in 1989, so I am a second-generation member in the faith. The first time I visited the Dharma center in Seoul with my mother was when I was in junior high school. Then, while getting a job, getting married, having a baby, and raising children, I only went to the Dharma center when there was a big event.

In August 2022, I gradually started going to the Dharma center regularly. The trigger was that since around 2018, my relationship with Ms. A, a good friend of mine, had become strained. Until then, I had trusted Ms. A with my true feelings, but one day, something happened that made me feel extremely betrayed.

I was shocked by this, and I began attending the *hoza*, or “Dharma Circle,” sessions and the Monthly Memorial Day ceremonies to examine my heart at the Dharma center. At the time, I did not ask the leader for advice about my problems with Ms. A. Now, thanks to the teaching, I no longer feel like blaming Ms. A, and I can pray for her happiness.



Ms. Choi participates in hoza at the Dharma center.



Ms. Choi Ugi is interviewed at the Dharma center.

### Now, you perform the role of group leader. Did you accept the role right away?

I mentioned earlier that I started attending the Dharma center in August 2022, but I was still working then and only went to the Dharma center on weekends. I quit my job at the end of 2023 and can now concentrate on my roles as homemaker and group leader. We are currently a family of four: my husband, myself, our daughter, and our son. My children are now college students, so they do not need much help from me. I do not have to worry about work, and my homelife has naturally settled down, so I feel I can now concentrate on my role at the Dharma center. I accepted the role of group leader with gratitude and joy, thinking that this was precisely what the Buddha had arranged for me.

### When do you feel the joy of your role?

Before I took on the role of group leader, I was more of a passive person, even though I participated in the Dharma center activities. However, after I was appointed as group leader on August 1, 2023, I began to take the initiative in my role and actively speak out. I want to do my best, knowing someone may be looking at my behavior and trying to learn from me. I am

unsure if I can call this feeling a sense of mission, but I see it as a merit I have received through performing my role.

**Please tell us what you have learned from activities such as guiding and connecting people to the Dharma.**

Currently, I have two close friends, one of whom is Ms. B. I invited her to the Dharma center when I started attending in August 2022, and she also participated in the Midwinter Sutra Recitation training. After that, I formally guided Ms. B to the faith, and thankfully, in September last year, we both received the locally bestowed Gohonzon, the “focus of devotion.”

Another friend, Ms. C, was someone I met at a local badminton club. With the wish to guide Ms. C, I invited her to the Dharma center once, and she came. However, my wish to get Ms. C to become a member

was so strong that I was not considerate enough of her feelings, and as a result, she gradually distanced herself from the center. I now reflect on what I did to Ms. C and am genuinely sorry. This experience taught me the importance of empathizing with others and listening empathetically to what they have to say.

**Did any words impress you during the Dharma seminars or hoza sessions?**

When I first started going to the Dharma center, the words, “Change yourself, and others will change accordingly,” strongly impressed me, and I still keep them in my heart. I think I strongly wished to change other people in the past. But if we think about it, we can change ourselves, but we cannot change other people. That is why it is essential to make an effort to change your perspective, way of thinking, and behavior rather than trying to change another person. I learned that if we truly change ourselves, the scenery we see and the way we think will change for the better.

**What do you think is the attraction of Rissho Kosei-kai?**

In many Buddhist traditions in Korea, the chief priest of the temple chants sutras and preaches, and lay followers pray by prostrating before the altar. I think that this practice by itself is very precious. However, at Rissho Kosei-kai, we can personally chant the sutra in the morning and evening, participate in *hoza* and other Dharma practices, and engage in Dharma dissemination activities such as guiding and connecting people to the teaching. The most significant aspect of Rissho Kosei-kai is that members can participate in all the training and activities themselves, then put them into practice.

**What kind of leader are you hoping to become?**

The person I most admire and aim to be like is Minister Rev. Lee Haeng-ja. Rev. Lee always puts effort into accurately conveying the teachings of Founder



Ms. Choi plays the drum during a Dharma center ceremony.

# Interview

Nikkyo Niwano and President Nichiko Niwano based on the truths of the Buddha and, at the same time, speaks in an easy-to-understand manner that we members can comprehend. My ideals are big and lofty, but I would like to become a core leader like Rev. Lee.

**Please tell us about your hopes and specific goals for the future.**

Looking back on 2023, I think it was the year I let everyone in the Dharma center get to know me as I started my activities. In 2024, I hope to take one step

further as a believer. As for my specific goals, I am still far from reaching them, but I would like to work even harder this year toward the role of area leader. I strive to grow into someone who is more attentive, mindful, and considerate toward others, who can empathize with their pain, and who can exercise compassion toward them. Also, although it is pretty challenging for me to put the teachings into practice at home, I would like to be a wife and mother who can practice at least one or two things that I have learned at the Dharma center.



*Ms. Choi with her family.*





# An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

## Becoming Members of Rissho Kosei-kai

### Practicing the Teaching as a Member

In Rissho Kosei-kai, all members reverently hold the invocation ceremony to enshrine at their home altar *Gohonzon*, the focus of devotion (the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, Great Benevolent Teacher, World-Honored One); *Gohogo*, the Dharma Titles of both Founder Nikkyo Niwano (Great Teacher of the One Vehicle) and Cofounder Myoko (Bodhisattva of the Way of Compassion); *Sokaimyo*, the posthumous name of all the spirits of ancestors in the family; and *Takuchi Innen*, the land purification inscription (a sort of posthumous name through which members pray for all the spirits connected to their residential land).

When the *Gohonzon* is enshrined in a member's home altar, sangha members gather there to offer the sutra recitation together and pledge to practice the teaching.



#### Did You Know?

Members chant the *O-daimoku*, “*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*,” every day. *Namu* means “taking refuge in,” and *Myoho Renge Kyo* means “the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma,” which is the full title of the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, the chanting of “*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*” is an expression of our wholehearted devotion to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and our vow to practice them.



## Buddhist Home Altars

At our home altar, we install *Gohonzon*, *Gohogo*, *Sokaimyo*, and *Takuchi Innen*. In the invocation prayer, we wholeheartedly call on all the names of those enshrined so that their spirits are present among us. We offer flowers, rice, bread, water, tea, coffee, or similar items, to the Buddha and all the spirits of ancestors in our own families with all our hearts.

The home altar is also the place where we start the day with a feeling of gratitude, vowing to do something good for others and to reflect on our deeds at the end of the day. The Buddha and your ancestors would be most pleased if you put your palms together with gratitude each morning and later report what you have done for the day, when you come back home.







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

### People Who Serve in Roles

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano  
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



#### **The Role of Being a Child of the Buddha**

In Rissho Kosei-kai, what we call a “role” is extremely important. You’ll often hear phrases like “That person is someone who has a role,” or “There is a role for you to play!”

This word “role” refers not only to official positions in the sangha, such as chapter leader and area leader, but the fact that every member has a vital role, which is to say that they have a calling. This should naturally become clear when we reflect on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra to which we devote ourselves.

First and foremost, in the “Skillful Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, it says that the Buddha appeared in this world for the “One Great Cause.” This “One Great Cause” is the grand aspiration to lead all people to embark upon the Buddha Way and guide them to attain a state equal to that of a buddha. As members of Rissho Kosei-kai, all of you are



already actively engaged in the “One Great Cause,” so when it comes to the role you share—as children and emissaries of the Buddha—I think it is to lead every single person possible to embark on the Buddha Way.

In addition to this primary role, there are many other roles within the Dharma center. The importance of these can easily be understood when you reflect on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. To summarize the main points of the Lotus Sutra’s teachings, they are as follows:

1. Everything that exists in the world is given the gift of life and sustained by the Eternal Original Buddha.
2. Therefore, all beings are essentially equal, and though they phenomenally manifest in myriad different roles, they all become buddhas by fulfilling their roles to the fullest.
3. This world is a community of all living beings, and the true way of life for all is to cooperate with one another. The ideal society (the “Land of Eternal Tranquil Light”) is the complete realization of that cooperation.

If you reexamine these three points, you’ll come to understand the importance of every kind of role.

*Bodai no me o okosashimu* (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 48–50





# Director's Column

## Hoping to Be a Person Who Brings Joy, Even to Strangers

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa  
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. Spring has come again this year, and on April 8 we will celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha. On this occasion, let us all reflect on the meaning of the Buddha's birth.

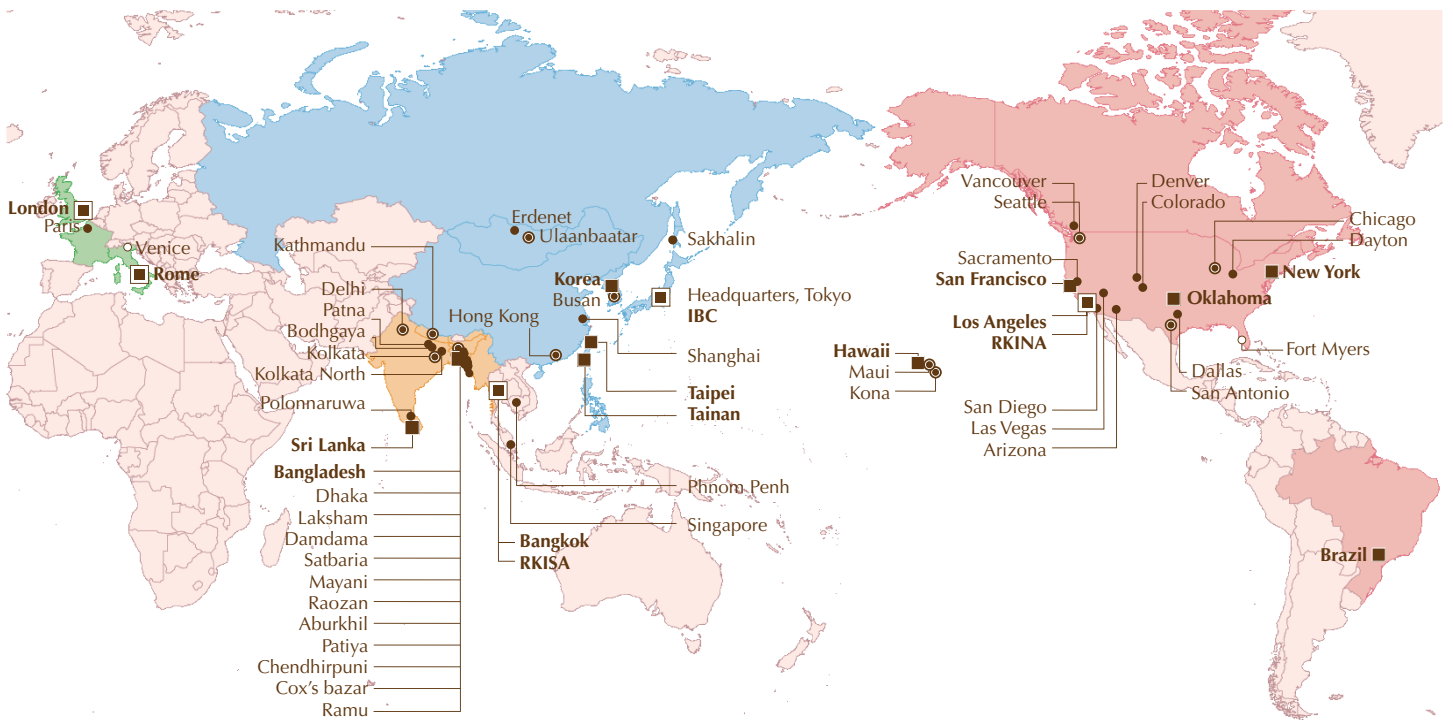
The other day, perhaps because I was distracted by the warm spring air, I made a big mistake. On my way to work, I lost my pass holder containing my key card for entering my workplace and my staff ID card. I checked everywhere but could not find it. I had no idea where I had dropped it, and I was driven by pessimistic thoughts that it would never be returned to me. However, somewhat resignedly, I called the Lost and Found Center at the metro station, and to my surprise, a kind person had already delivered the lost item to a station office in Tokyo, even though it had only been about four hours since I lost it. I had been feeling depressed, regretting my carelessness, but the moment I realized that it would definitely be returned to me, the world brightened up before my eyes. My heart was filled with gratitude for the warmth and thoughtfulness of the stranger who had delivered my pass holder. This small, bitter experience made me feel strongly that I want to be a person who can bring peace of mind and joy to others, even strangers, under this vast sky, just like the person who helped me.



*Rev. Akagawa (front row, center) with the members of the Taipei Dharma Center, on February 25, 2024.*



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