

# Living the Lotus 10

*Buddhism in Everyday Life*

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**Members from the Taipei and Tainan Dharma Centers  
Joined the Leaders Training Retreat in Taichung, Taiwan,  
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## **Living the Lotus Vol. 229 (October 2024)**

Senior Editor: Keiichi Akagawa  
Editor: Sachi Mikawa  
Copy Editor: Ayshea Wild

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TEL: +81-3-5341-1124 / FAX: +81-3-5341-1224  
Email: [living.the.lotus.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp](mailto:living.the.lotus.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp)

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.



## Cultivate Your Mind, Return to Your Inner Buddha

Rev. Nichiko Niwano  
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

### Deepening Awareness of Our Buddha Nature

Shakyamuni said that if we sow seeds of faith in our minds and continue to cultivate them without interruption, we “will be liberated from every kind of suffering.” These words resound with a powerful message, not only for those who were present in Shakyamuni’s time, but also for those of us who are living today. So, we should eagerly accept these splendid words and pursue the Buddha Way.

As I wrote in last month’s issue, however, it would be naive to wonder if “trying once to cultivate your mind would free you from suffering.” I think that as we repeat the words and deeds constituting bodhisattva practices that cultivate and soften the soil of our minds, in the course of our daily lives, we are uncovering our inner buddha—that is, unearthing our own buddha nature—which in turn will lead us to a life with less suffering.

One moment, you may realize the sanctity of yourself and others, possessing the same nature as the Buddha, only to feel overwhelmed by doubt again the next. Or at other times you may forget that realization. However, when you see someone in trouble and feel compassion for them—that is, the desire to do something to help them—this will remind you that you yourself are the buddha nature, and your awareness will deepen. It is important to repeat such experiences.

This month, we observe the anniversary of Founder Niwano’s entering Nirvana. He taught us, time and again, the importance of each person realizing the buddha nature in themselves and others. The Lotus Sutra, the scripture in which we place our faith, is said to be “a sutra that explains the importance of human beings realizing their own buddha nature.” If we bring forth and put into action the “treasures of the mind”—the buddha nature—such as the conscience, sincerity, and good intentions that we all possess, we will always have cheerful minds and live peaceful lives.

However, if we forget to cultivate our minds for just a little while, the soil of our minds hardens and loses its flexibility, and then we can not see the buddha nature in ourselves and

others. As an ancient text says, “Those who do not know that they have buddha nature within them are called ordinary persons.” Therefore, you should be able to return to your inner buddha at any time, but sometimes you may forget this and end up believing that your deluded self is your true self.

## The Mind of Compassion Unearths Our Buddha Nature

In that case, how can you return to your original self, which is one and the same as the buddha nature? One clue is found in the words of Founder Niwano, who used to say that “buddha nature is the mind of compassion.” As I mentioned earlier, every time we give rise to the mind of compassion and put it into practice, we are unearthing our buddha nature. For example, if you see in a spider—an animal you usually dislike—the same spark of life that you have, and that stops you from killing it, then with your mind of compassion, you have revered the spider’s buddha nature, and moreover, the spider has caused you to unearth your own buddha nature and made you more aware of it.

However, even though we gradually deepen our awareness of the buddha nature, when things do not go as we wish, we end up complaining, getting angry, or being mean to others. In addition, some people may feel ashamed or troubled by the gap between their inconsiderate self and their self that is aware of the buddha nature.

That said, there is no need for self-deprecating thoughts, such as “for someone like me, realization of my buddha nature is impossible.” Even a high-ranking monk of the past admitted that “My great awakenings have been eighteen, and my small awakenings are beyond count.” While repeatedly experiencing awakening and performing self-reflection, this monk continued to cultivate his mind by always trying to live like the Buddha. This suggests that the very awareness of a sense of humility becomes the stepping stone to growth and self-improvement. Furthermore, I think that the most important thing is that we are grateful for the blessing of having been given life as human beings, who are capable of grasping that all living beings have buddha nature, and we are always kind and considerate.

Founder Niwano said, “As we continue to perform deeds that make other people happy, the mind of great compassion, the buddha nature bestowed upon us, shines brighter and brighter,” and that “One buddha nature resonating with another buddha nature builds the realm of the Buddha.” Therefore, I believe that we are all living beings who will inherently be freed from every kind of suffering.

From *Kosei*, October 2024



## Hoping That Parents and Children Will Grow Together through Family Education

Ms. Kusumawathi Podimanike, Rishho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka

### When and how did you become a member of Rishho Kosei-kai?

I was a teacher in public schools for many years. The Buddhist school where I worked had a statue of the Buddha, and I had a daily routine of serving the Buddha. One Saturday, there were no classes, but as my home was close to the school, I went to serve the Buddha as usual, and I found a seminar on family education being held in a hall with a large number of participants. After I served the Buddha, I attended the seminar and was somehow drawn to the lecture, which left me with a fresh sense of wonder I had never experienced before.

In particular, during the seminar, the lecturer emphasized how important it is for parents to take the initiative in the home to say “Good morning” and “Thank you.” You would think that would be a common practice in the home. However, even if parents are familiar with the phrases, it is difficult for them to put the words into practice. Later, I learned that the organization that hosted the family education seminar was Rishho Kosei-kai in Japan. I became interested in learning and practicing this wonderful family education for myself, so I later visited the Sri Lanka Dharma Center in Colombo and became a member of Rishho Kosei-kai on September 9, 2018.

### Since then, you have done a lot of work to promote family education, haven't you?

I was so moved that I wanted to convey the importance of family education to schoolteachers and parents. So I have held seminars on family education in a number of schools, including elementary and junior high schools where I previously taught. As a result, I think I helped many people to understand the importance of family education, as well as the activi-



Ms. Podimanike delivers her Dharma Journey talk at the Sri Lanka Dharma Center.

ties of Rishho Kosei-kai and the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

Sri Lanka has an important monthly holiday called the Poya Day, which originates from Buddhism and is celebrated on each full moon at temples. On this day, the Sri Lanka Dharma Center also holds a Poya Day ceremony. Just like the ceremonies on Rishho Kosei-kai's monthly memorial days, after the sutra recitation, members give Dharma Journey talks and Rev. Hironobu Suzuki, minister of the Dharma center, delivers a lecture. I have invited participants in the family education seminars to the Poya Day ceremony and have so far connected fifteen people with the Dharma. I am still lacking in knowledge and ability as a lecturer, but with the help of the members of the Dharma center, I am conveying to people the importance of family education.

## What is the most wonderful thing you have learned from family education?

Based on the philosophy that “when a parent changes, the child will change,” family education teaches us that we, the parents, must change first. We tend to try to change others without changing ourselves. At home, we tend to think *Why doesn't my husband try to change?* or *How can I change my children for the better?* But in family education, we value learning from our children's words and actions, and changing ourselves. And we believe that the most wonderful thing is that parents and children can grow and develop together through family education.

## Do you have a role in the Dharma center? And are you still working as a teacher?

In Rissho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka, members' homes are used as dissemination bases, where local members gather for sutra recitation and *hoza*, or “Dharma circle.” There are currently eighty-two such bases, which we call family *hoza*, throughout Sri Lanka. I have been given the role of head of a family *hoza* in Kegalle District, which is about three hours away by bus from Colombo, where our Dharma center is located. I think the role is like that of an area leader in Japan. I retired from teaching in public schools two years ago and am now a teacher at an international school.



Ms. Podimanike with Rev. Hironobu Suzuki, minister of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center (right), after the presentation ceremony of the focus of devotion held in the Dharma center.



At home with her husband.

## Last year you received the Dharma Teacher Qualification of Rissho Kosei-kai. Did it change your way of thinking?

To attend the presentation ceremony of the Dharma Teacher Qualification, I visited the Great Sacred Hall, which is Rissho Kosei-kai's fundamental place of the Way, for the first time. I was originally a Theravada Buddhist and had visited famous temples in various countries, but I felt very different this time. When I saw the magnificent building of the Great Sacred Hall and the gentle face of the Buddha, I was moved more than words can express, and for some reason tears welled up in my eyes. *I am so glad to have been born. I was connected with Rissho Kosei-kai through my work as a teacher, I encountered the Lotus Sutra, and I had this opportunity to visit the Great Sacred Hall.* These thoughts ran through my mind, and my heart was filled with gratitude.

Many overseas members participated in the ceremony, and I thought that if all of us members of Rissho Kosei-kai share this teaching with many more people around us, we will surely realize a world without war and conflict. I also made a vow to the Buddha that I would continue to actively study the teachings and share them with as many people as possible.

## Are there any teachings in the Lotus Sutra that you hold close to your heart?

The five practices of the teachers of the Dharma are described in chapter 10, “Teachers of the Dharma.” In order to disseminate the Lotus Sutra, I practice daily with the awareness of a Dharma Teacher, keeping in mind the five practices, which are receiving and keeping the Lotus Sutra, reading it, reciting it, expounding it, and copying it.

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

The Sri Lanka Dharma Center focuses on family education as one of Rissho Kosei-kai’s social-contribution activities. As a lay Buddhist organization, Rissho Kosei-kai’s major characteristic is helping us apply and practice the Buddha’s teachings in our daily lives. I believe that family education is one of the means of putting the Buddha’s teachings into practice in a concrete way, and that is one of Rissho Kosei-kai’s most attractive features. I believe that family education is very important today in building family relationships where husbands and wives, and parents and children, appreciate each other and respect each other every day. The people of Sri Lanka are very enthusiastic about education, but at the same time, many mothers are struggling to raise their children. We believe that family education will play an increasingly important role in the society of Sri



*Ms. Podimanike (front row, second from right) and other overseas recipients of the Dharma Teacher Qualification after the presentation ceremony held in the Great Sacred Hall.*



*After the presentation ceremony of the Dharma Teacher Qualification (from left to right): Ms. Podimanike; Rev. Keiichi Akagawa, director of Rissho Kosei-kai International; another recipient from the Sri Lanka Dharma Center; and a member on duty for the day.*

Lanka and will be increasingly sought after by its people to nurture the human resources that will lead the country in the future.

## Finally, what are your hopes and goals?

I am still inexperienced as a Dharma Teacher, so I hope to learn more about Rissho Kosei-kai’s teachings and the Lotus Sutra. I am ashamed to admit that until now I didn’t say “Thank you” very often. But now, when I wake up in the morning, I say, “Thank you for letting me live today.” I can now thank the Buddha and the blessings of nature, and I can say “Thank you” naturally to my family and people around me. It is thanks to the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai that I have grown spiritually, little by little. Therefore, I would like to continue to study more and share the teachings of the Buddha and the importance of family education with as many people as possible. I am happy to announce that this coming November, I will be holding a family education seminar at the international school where I work. I am very much looking forward to it and hoping that many people will come to the event.

I think Japan is the most peaceful and prosperous Buddhist country in the world. May the spirit of the Japanese people be transmitted to other countries throughout the world.

# An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

## Annual Events of Rissho Kosei-kai

### The President's First Dharma Talk

The President's first Dharma talk is an annual program held at the Great Sacred Hall on January 7 of each new year. In this Dharma talk, President Niwano explains to all members the purpose of the organization's activities throughout the year and speaks about what each member should accomplish based on the New Year's "Guidelines for Members' Practice in the Faith." He also guides us on the mindset each member should have for the year.

The President's Dharma talk is broadcast nationally at each Dharma center via satellite.

On this day, members gathering at the Great Sacred Hall, or their Dharma centers, renew their resolve for the New Year.



#### Did You Know?

In Japan, January 7 is considered the last day of the traditional New Year's festival, so it is said that people return to their normal lives from this day forward. On this day, it is customary to eat seven-herb rice porridge, which contains seven kinds of herbs and spring vegetables, such as Japanese parsley and shepherd's purse, and to pray to lead healthy lives throughout the year.

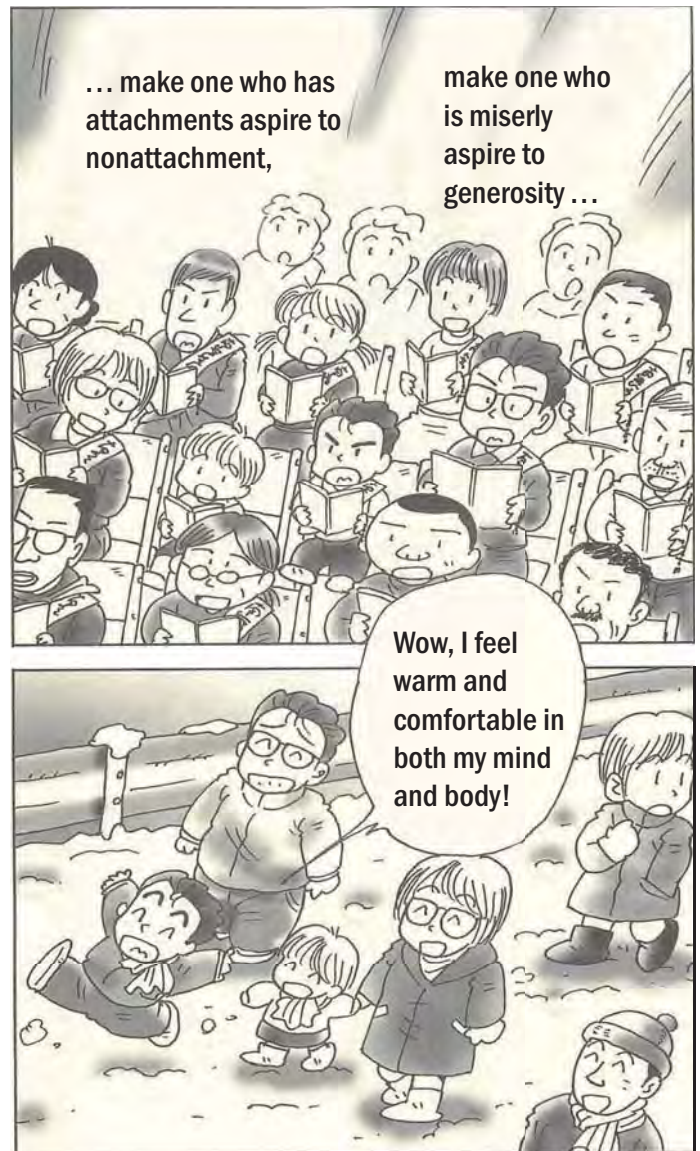




## Annual Midwinter Sutra Recitation

The two-week period from January 20 through February 3, which ends with *setsubun*, the day before the beginning of spring in the old Japanese calendar, is traditionally considered the coldest time of year in Japan. During this period, members assemble at the Great Sacred Hall, or their Dharma centers and branches across the country, and recite the Threefold Lotus Sutra. At the Great Sacred Hall, the practice starts at 6 a.m. each day and continues for fifteen days.

It is very tough to get up early and participate in this practice, especially during the coldest time of the year. However, when we can overcome this, we feel joy and a sense of fulfillment that gives us more strength. Furthermore, we feel refreshed by wholeheartedly reciting the sutra.



### Did You Know?

*Setsubun* literally means “seasonal division,” referring to the day just before the first day of spring, summer, autumn, and winter in the Japanese traditional calendar. *Setsubun* is now typically celebrated on February 3, the eve of the first day of spring. On this day, people in Japan traditionally dispel evil spirits by scattering roasted soybeans inside and outside their homes, shouting “Fortune in, devils out.”





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

### We Are Given the Gift of Life by the Buddha

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano  
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



#### **Live in Pursuit of the Way**

Throughout the Lotus Sutra, we are taught that we are given the gift of life and sustained by the Buddha.

These verses from chapter 3, “A Parable,” also tell us so: “Now this threefold world / Is all my domain, / And the living beings in it / Are all my children. / But now it is filled / With disaster and trouble, / And only I am able / To rescue and protect them.”

The Buddha says of all human beings that they “are all my children.” The implication is that we are given the gift of life and sustained by the Buddha.



And the following verses in chapter 3 tell us that although there are countless difficulties in this world, the Buddha is always watching over us: “But now it is filled / With disaster and trouble, / And only I am able / To rescue and protect them.”

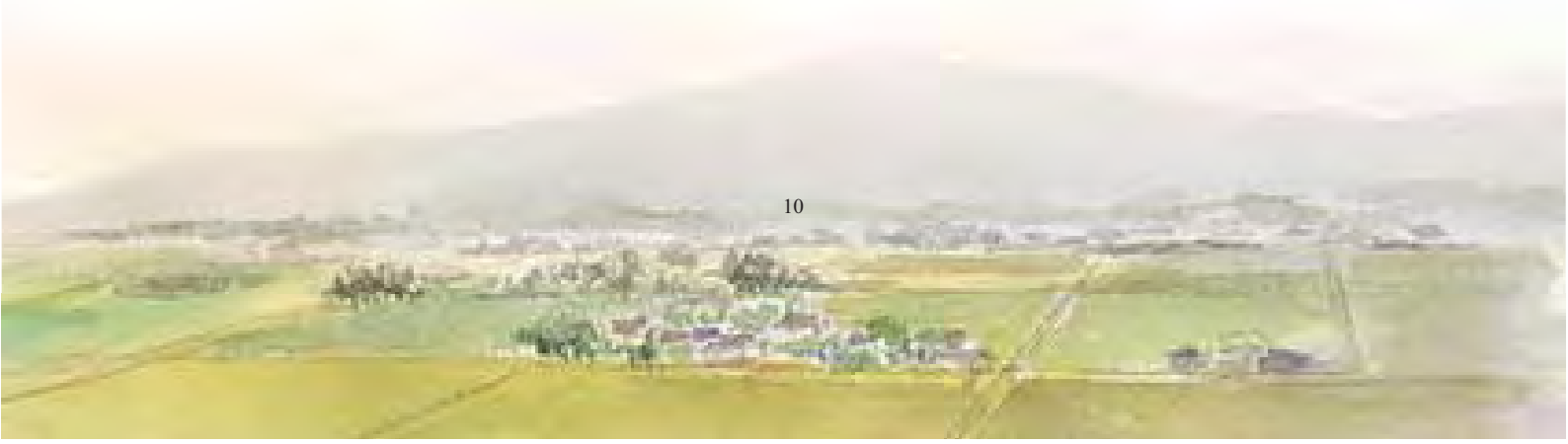
We find another example in chapter 16, “The Life Span of the Eternal Tathagata,” where the Buddha tells us “I have ceaselessly expounded the Dharma, / Teaching and transforming countless millions of beings, / And enabling them to embark upon the Buddha Way.”

This means that our minds’ aspiration to “embark upon the Buddha Way” is also thanks to the Buddha’s teaching and transforming us, and that everyone is born and lives for the purpose of entering the Buddha Way.

And at the end of “The Life Span of the Eternal Tathagata,” it says, “I am ever thinking: / ‘How can I cause living beings to / Embark upon the unsurpassable Way / And quickly accomplish embodiment as buddhas?’” Here, the Lotus Sutra teaches us that the Buddha is continually mindful of his wish to make us all become buddhas quickly.

When we carefully read these sutra passages, it becomes clear that we are endowed with life by the Buddha. Since it is evident that we are given the gift of life and sustained by the Buddha in this way, we should, with sincerity, forthrightly walk the Buddha Way.

*Bodai no me o okosashimu* (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 60–61



# Director's Column

## What I Learned from My Health Checkup

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa  
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. As we enter October, Japan is finally welcoming the harvest season.

In this month's message, President Niwano introduces us to the idea of "awareness of our buddha nature." When do you become aware of your own buddha nature? I would like to talk about this theme based on my recent experience.

I have a full medical checkup every year to monitor my health. After this year's checkup, I received a notice saying that I would need to have my kidneys reexamined, and it said that "if the current situation is left untreated, in the worst-case scenario, a kidney transplant or hemodialysis treatment may be necessary." I was shocked, so I immediately had a reexamination and went to hear the results from the doctor in charge. The doctor advised me that "Fortunately, the results are not at a level where you need to start treatment, but I recommend that you continue to eat a well-balanced diet low in salt and do some moderate aerobic exercise. Please get some advice from a diet counselor on your way home."

When you consider any of the functions of the kidneys—excretion of waste products, regulation of the body's salt concentration, and maintaining the body's slightly alkaline state—it seems that miraculous, life-preserving activities are taking place there every moment. This reexamination became an opportunity for me to make a vow to "live with the will of life, that is to say, with a mind that is in accord with my buddha nature."

And as I was inspired by this month's message, I would like to continue to do things that make others happy and make the buddha nature that I have received shine brighter. This month, I will dedicate myself to the bodhisattva path with a heart of kindness and compassion.



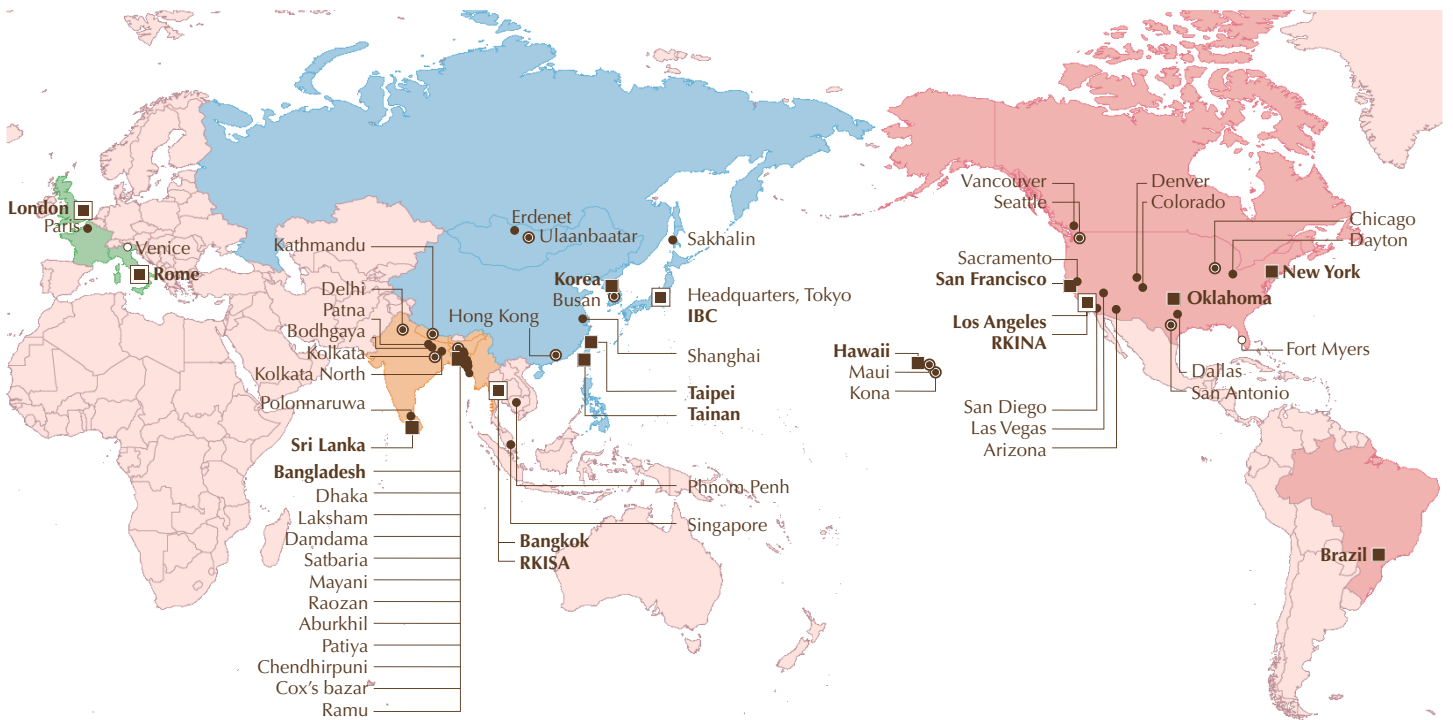
Overseas members visiting Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters are welcomed to the office of Rissho Kosei-kai International (RKI). Top right: Rev. Akagawa and RKI staff members welcome members from the New York Dharma Center (back row, center). Bottom left: Rev. Akagawa chats with a member of the Ulaanbaatar Chapter and her daughter.

# Rissho Kosei-kai International

Make Every Encounter Matter



## 🌸 A Global Buddhist Movement 🌸



Information about local Dharma centers



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✉ We welcome comments on our newsletter *Living the Lotus*: [living.the.lotus.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp](mailto:living.the.lotus.rk-international@kosei-kai.or.jp)