

Living the Lotus 11

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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**Rissho Kosei-kai of San Francisco Celebrates
Its 45th Anniversary on September 15**



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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.



Nurtured by Encounters— The Mind of Reverence and the Mind of Humility, Part 1

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai

Developing the Mind of Reverence

About a year ago, when I offered my “Guidelines for Members’ Practice of the Faith” for this year, I cited these words of Masahiro Yasuoka (1898–1983): “The most important thing, for the improvement of humanity, is developing the mind of reverence and knowing humility.” The mind that aspires to greatness is important not only for people of faith, but for all people. No less important is mutual respect between human beings because it is the basis for a peaceful society.

However, as I have mentioned before, those who cannot revere themselves are said to be unable to revere others. Indeed, were I to be asked if I revere myself, my honest reply would be that I find it very difficult.

And yet, as I have also said many times before, in my home, we pay homage with our palms pressed together reverently to a statue of the Buddha, who also has his palms pressed together reverently, which makes me realize that I am worthy of respect. Every morning and every night, when I face the Buddha and pay homage with my palms pressed together reverently, I humbly reflect upon the fact that the Buddha also reveres me.

This year, for my New Year’s calligraphy, I wrote, with ink and brush, *ikei* [畏敬], a word meaning “in awe.” Of course, I did so because I think the mind of reverence is important. However, when we think about what we are in awe of, forms of existence and forces at work come to mind that are far beyond human knowledge and capability, such as the gods and the buddhas, the universe, and nature. Such awe may include having the mind of reverence for saints, sages, and great figures of history, but at the same time, I think that the people and things we come into contact with on a daily basis—every one of our encounters—can also be objects of our awe, as the mind of reverence can only be cultivated in the course of our daily lives.

Encounters Are Nourishment for the Mind

One example of this is the case of parents and children. A parent often thinks their one-sided point of view is correct, so they scold their children. Perhaps this is why, since time immemorial, it has been said that fostering the mind of reverence between parents and children is difficult to do, and even the Chinese philosopher Mencius (372–289 BCE) advised, “Parents, do not teach your children.” I believe that even though parents are parents and children are children, they nevertheless have their own identities and are different from one other. Therefore, it is important that parents show respect for their children’s identities when they interact with them. That way, children will also show respect for their parents’ identities and try to understand what their parents are telling them. Indeed, for parents and their children to have a good relationship and see eye to eye, parents must respect their children’s identities. Furthermore, parents should never forget the mental attitude of “words matching deeds,” so that there is no discrepancy between what they say and what they do, which I think is a good way to foster the mind of reverence between parents and children.

We tend to think that being reverent means being attentive only to things that are “superior” to us. However, people who are on the same level as us, or who are younger or have less experience than we do, are also important for fostering our mind of reverence. And this is the same in the case of couples or friends. The important thing is that we recognize the identity of the other person and that we are receptive to that person’s strengths and virtues, praising and emulating them, because doing so fosters the mind of reverence in ourselves and others. I think that when we accept people in this way, every encounter becomes nourishment for fostering the mind of reverence, which comports with the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect’s practice of revering others.

Konosuke Matsushita (1894–1989), the founder of Panasonic, who is called “the God of Management,” said, “If you have the mind of reverence for natural phenomena and this world, there are countless things worth revering,” (*Michi o hiraku* [Opening the way], PHP Institute, 1965). Moreover, he stated that “Human beings have been given the capability to find something of value, worthy of revering, in all things and all people,” and he calls on us to put that capability to use and together refine our minds of reverence (Matsushita 1965).

However, as Masahiro Yasuoka tells us, “Once you develop the mind of reverence, you will certainly reflect upon your own relatively humble reality and give rise to the mind of humility.” So encounters also foster another important mental attitude—knowing humility. In next month’s issue, let’s think about the mind of humility as well as the significance of sharing the Dharma with others, which for us is a very important kind of encounter.



From *Kosei*, November 2024

Interview

Hoping Everyone Can Live Happily and in Harmony Through the Buddha's Teachings

Ms. Che Kap Sun, Rissho Kosei-kai of Sakhalin, Russia



When and how did you join Rissho Kosei-kai?

I joined Rissho Kosei-kai in November 2014. My husband had passed away the year before, and I was overcome with grief. One of my relatives, Ms. Pak Ok Khi [currently living in South Korea], was worried about me and recommended that I join Rissho Kosei-kai. As I believed in the Russian Orthodox faith, however, I was hesitant to join a Buddhist organization. I wondered if it was okay to convert from the Russian Orthodox Church to Buddhism. After mulling it over for a year, I thought, *It's important to venerate my ancestors, and I can pray for the repose of my late husband and parents. Anyway, I'll go and visit Rissho Kosei-kai once.* Accompanied by Ms. Pak, I visited the Sakhalin Hoza Center. Members of the sangha welcomed me warmly with smiles, putting their palms together reverently. I chanted *o-daimoku*, recited the Lotus Sutra for the first time, and listened to members' stories of the faith. I don't know why, but I sweated profusely at the time, which I remember felt surprisingly pleasant.

After that, why did you decide to become a member?

Ms. Pak handed me a copy of *Kyoten* [extracts from the Threefold Lotus Sutra] in Russian. After that, whenever we met, she asked me if I had read *Kyoten*. She said, "It may sound a little difficult at first, but if you read it repeatedly, you'll understand its splendor." Prompted by her words, I began to recite *Kyoten*. My understanding must have been shallow, but I thought I had discovered the profundity of the Lotus Sutra that clearly explains the aims of our lives, and I decided to become a member.

Do you have a special mindset when you recite the sutra every day?

Sutra recitation is a basic practice for Rissho Kosei-kai members, and I think it is a practice of expressing our gratitude for the Buddha and our ancestors. It is an expression of our gratitude for



Ms. Che Kap Sun

having been granted precious lives, as well as for being alive now. As a matter of fact, I sometimes miss morning sutra recitation when I am busy getting ready for work. On such days, after returning home from work, I offer my thanks for the day by reciting the sutra wholeheartedly, trying to savor every sentence of the sutra.

Did you have an experience that you think was a reward of sutra recitation?

I used to work in the kitchen in a Korean restaurant. It was a very tough and stressful job, and there were lots of things I didn't like. Sometimes I came home exhausted both mentally and physically. However, when I recited the sutra with all my heart in front of my home altar, my heart began to calm down, and I came to feel very peaceful. I could also sleep well and wake up feeling refreshed the next morning and actively engage in my work. This experience taught me that sutra recitation was a dialogue with the Buddha, which gave me strength as well as a means of offering thanks to the Buddha.

Is there any teaching in the Lotus Sutra that you keep in mind?

Chapter 20 of the Lotus Sutra relates the story of the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect, who continued to revere the buddha nature in everyone. I was deeply moved by the bodhisattva's single-minded practice and made it my spiritual support. The Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect approached groups of people and said, "I deeply revere you. All of you will become buddhas," and continued to revere people's buddha nature. Those who heard this got angry and scorned and abused the bodhisattva, thinking that he was making fun of them. Some even threw stones or beat him with canes. Nevertheless, the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect continued to revere people's buddha nature, and because of his unwavering practice, he eventually became a buddha. Having a big goal and working toward it must be very hard, but I want to be a person who makes single-minded efforts, following the example of the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect, and always interacting with people respectfully.

Are there any words that you especially value in the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai?

Founder Nikkyo Niwano taught us in his Dharma talks "Change yourself, and others will change accordingly." I think it is a wonderful teaching, and I like it very much. In our homes, workplaces, and local communities, we sometimes try to change other people before we will change ourselves, and conse-



Ms. Che (front row, right) with her fellow sangha members in front of the altar at the Sakhalin Hoza Center.



Ms. Che (left) polishes Buddhist altar fittings at the Sakhalin Hoza Center.

quently bring about conflict and arguments. But if we stop and think about it carefully, it is obvious that we can't change others. What we can change in an instant is our own minds. I think that endeavoring to change ourselves for the better is a noble and wonderful way of living.

What aspect of Rissho Kosei-kai are you fascinated by?

I find the ties of the sangha most fascinating. Gathering at the hoza center, reciting the sutra together, sharing the stories of the faith, and interacting with one another—all of these are very valuable activities for us. Thanks to the sangha, we can help, encourage, and support each other. It allows us to walk the Buddha Way together cheerfully and with the heart of gratitude. I am particularly grateful for hoza because we can share joys and sorrows in life, learn the Dharma together, and grow together as human beings.

Finally, please tell us what you are hoping for most.

I want everyone to live happily and in harmony with others through the teachings of the Buddha. I want to continue to work with the sangha of the Sakhalin Hoza Center to share the Buddha's precious teachings with as many people as possible in Sakhalin and help them become happy. And if I may say something personal, I sincerely hope that my five grandchildren will grow up healthy and kind.

An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

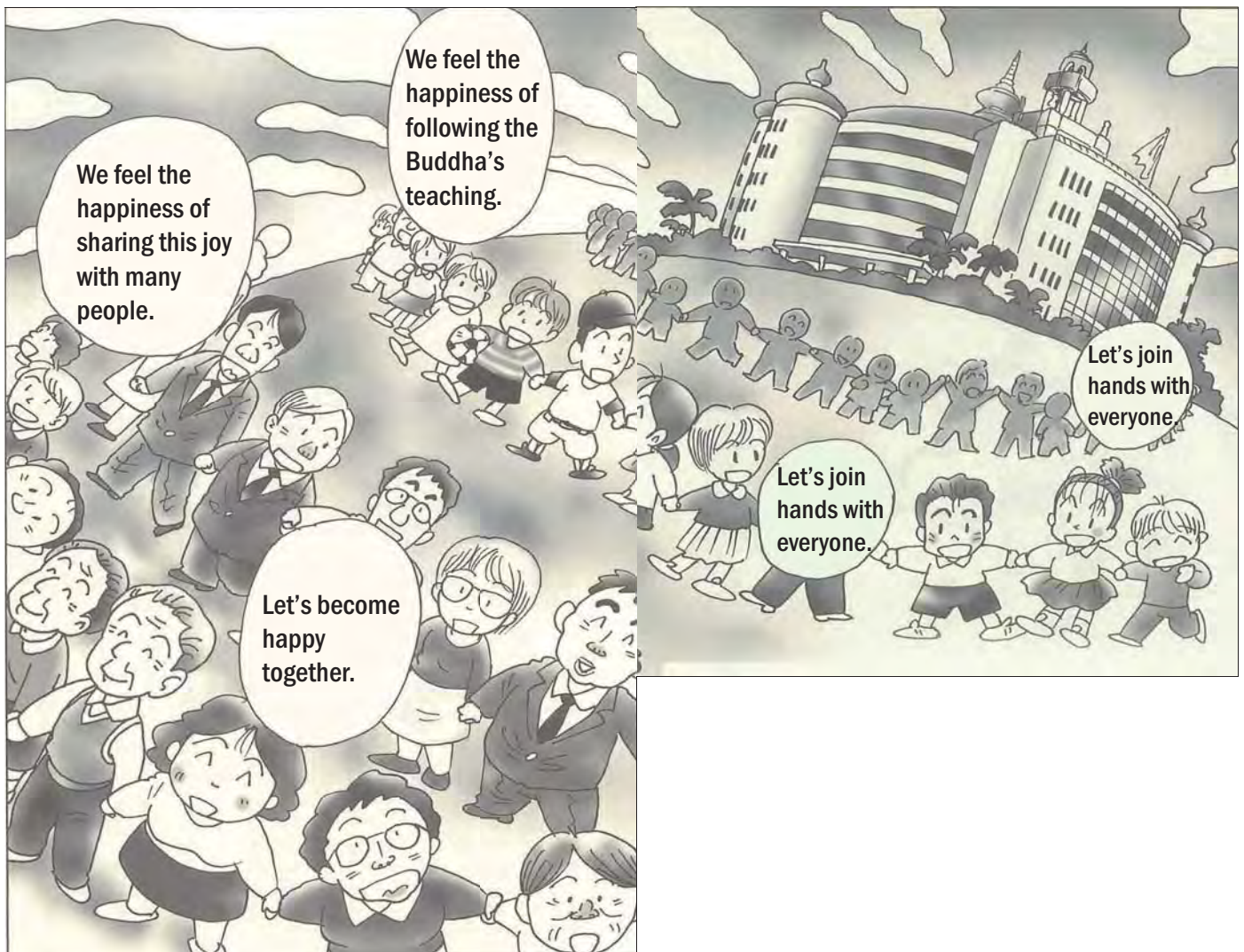
Annual Events of Rissho Kosei-kai

The Anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai's Founding

March 5 is the anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai's founding. Rissho Kosei-kai was founded on March 5, 1938, by Founder Niwano together with Cofounder Myoko Naganuma, with the wish to liberate people from suffering and help them attain happiness through the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

When Rissho Kosei-kai was first established, there were about thirty members. Now, however, it has become a large religious organization, even with members overseas. This is because members have learned the teaching, found happiness, and passed that joy on to many others.

On this day, at the Great Sacred Hall, or in Dharma centers, members deeply reflect on the significance of the founding and renew their vow to spread the teaching.



Youth Day

At each Rissho Kosei-kai Dharma center, there is a Youth Group. The Youth Group includes a Children's Group for elementary school kids and a Students' Group for middle school and high school students. On the third Sunday of every May, Rissho Kosei-kai youth members in different places across Japan engage in various social and peace initiatives, praying for the happiness of all people in the world. The organization observes this day as Youth Day.

On this day, in response to local requests, each Dharma center engages in activities such as providing cleaning services, interacting with older people at welfare facilities, calling for peace and raising awareness of environmental issues, holding bazaars and flea markets, and organizing street fundraising for UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). In addition, as part of this shared program, a one-minute prayer for peace is offered at noon.



Did You Know?

The Youth Day activities began in May 1970 under the name "Nationwide Action for Youth Solidarity." Traffic safety campaigns, blood donation, and volunteer clean-up activities were carried out with the slogan "Let's create a brighter society with our own hands."





Germinating the Seeds of Awakening

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



The Cycle of Birth and Death Is the Life of the Buddha

In Buddhism, birth, aging, sickness, and death are representative forms of suffering referred to as the four sufferings. In reality, human life always involves many types of hardship. Even in such circumstances, we can live in good health and mutually support each other in devoting ourselves to the practice of the bodhisattva way. This is not due to our own power; it is only because we are given the gift of life and sustained by the Buddha. And it is when we are happy that we tend to think, “The Buddha is protecting me,” or “The Buddha is sustaining me,” but this is not the case.

When we face an unexpected, serious illness—a family member is involved in a traffic accident,



or our company goes bankrupt—we tend to feel as if we have been abandoned by the Buddha. However, it is precisely during such times that the Buddha is extending his hands to liberate us.

A middle-aged member once shared the following spiritual journey: They ran an extensive operation of several restaurants, but gradually their debts increased, and they had to let go of one or two of their establishments. On top of this, they had to undergo surgery for a serious illness, and they fell into the depths of despair. Despite this, the surgery was somehow successful, and they gradually began to recover their health. One morning, they awoke to the sound of birdsong and thought, “I am indeed alive!” The moment this realization struck them, it caused them to recall the words they had once heard from a sangha leader: “You are being sustained by the Buddha.”

Until then, this person believed they had expanded their business and overcome every hardship through their own efforts. However, from that day onward, they always said, “My life has transformed into one where I can live every day with gratitude for being sustained by the Buddha.”

We usually wish that nothing bad happens and that good things will continue. And when things go on like this for a while, we believe that it is entirely due to our own efforts. However, when we stubbornly cling to the attitude of “I am living by my own power,” we can no longer receive the protection of the Buddha and end up being hounded by the sufferings of the saha world.

Zen Master Dogen (1200–1253) writes in his book *Shobogenzo* that “This life and death of ours are none other than the life of the Buddha. If you try to avoid or discard them, you are trying to rid yourself of the life of the Buddha.”

This means that all suffering, as exemplified by birth, aging, sickness, and death, is—just as it is—the Buddha’s compassion. After all, we were born by receiving the gift of the Buddha’s life, and when we fall ill, grow old, or pass away, all of it is the life of the Buddha and within the heart of the Buddha’s compassion.

It is precisely because there is suffering that we feel joy when we are liberated from it. And that suffering is nothing other than the workings of the Buddha’s great mercy and compassion—that is, providing people the opportunity to walk the Buddha Way—that leads them to true happiness.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 61–63



Director's Column

Making Every Encounter My Teacher

Rev. Keichi Akagawa
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. As autumn deepens in Japan, the beauty of the colored leaves is reaching its peak across the country. How are you all spending your November?

In this month's message, referring to Rissho Kosei-kai's "Guidelines for Members' Practice of the Faith" for this year, President Niwano reminds us of the importance of "the mind of reverence" and "the mind of humility." He then tells us that all encounters can become nourishment for fostering the mind of reverence. The way we accept encounters will differ depending on who we meet or how we meet someone, but it is precisely during these encounters that we, as practitioners and seekers, are called upon to examine our own hearts. It is easy to imagine that there will be a significant difference in the outcome of an encounter depending on whether we accept it with a self-centered mind or with a heart of gratitude and humility.

Every time I read the President's monthly messages, I remember the words of the President in *My Father, My Teacher*, a collection of his autobiographical essays published more than forty years ago. The book vividly describes his feelings in the years before he inherited the Lamp of the Dharma from his father, Founder Niwano. It also shows us his consistent attitude as a religious person who accepts all encounters as his teachers. On a pleasant autumn holiday, I would like to pick up this insightful book again and quietly reread it.

This November, as I learned in this month's message, I would like to accept every encounter as nourishment to foster my mind of reverence and, as the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect showed us, practice revering all people I meet.



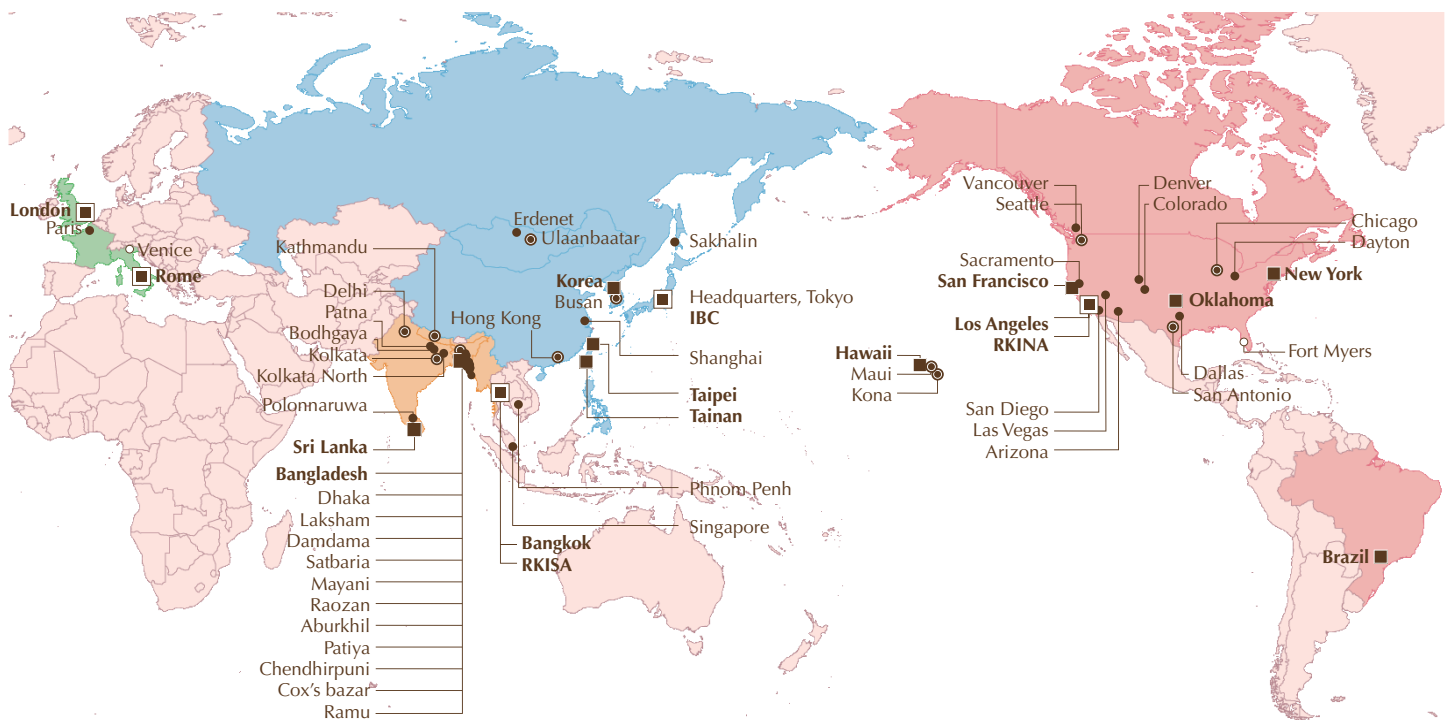
Rev. Kiyohiko Yoshizawa (top right), director of Rissho Kosei-kai International of North America, and Mr. Suman Barua (bottom left), assistant minister of Rissho Kosei-kai of Kolkata, India, receive the Gohonzon from Rev. Akagawa at the Gohonzon Presentation Ceremony, held in the Fumon Media Center at Rissho Kosei-kai's headquarters in Tokyo.

Rissho Kosei-kai International

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