

Living the Lotus 3

Buddhism in Everyday Life

2025
VOL. 234



Rissho Kosei-kai in India: Delhi, Gaya, and Assam

Living the Lotus Vol. 234 (March 2025)

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Living the Lotus is published monthly by Rissho Kosei-kai International, Fumon Media Center 3F, 2-7-1 Wada, Suginami-ku, Tokyo 166-8537, Japan.
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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.

Being Grateful for Nature

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



We Humans Are the Destroyers of Nature

It goes without saying that our lives are supported by everything that exists outside of ourselves. In particular, if there were no sun, water, or air, not only we humans but all living beings would be unable to survive. This fact by itself should be enough for us to understand the importance of expressing gratitude for nature.

Even so, we tend to forget to be thankful for the blessings we receive from nature. Furthermore, human beings, with their highly developed intelligence, arrogantly think of themselves as superior and have continued to destroy the earth's environment in their quest for personal convenience and comfort. From the perspective of nature, we humans are nothing but destroyers.

Hakudo Ayukawa, a priest of the Rinzai sect of Japanese Zen Buddhism, uses the idea of letting animals and plants speak to humorously criticize the arrogance of human beings: "Hey there, humans, for a long time we plants and animals have been thankful to this earth for keeping us alive, and we worked together to take care of it. You newbies are gobbling up everything all by yourselves. . . . Just because you're a little smarter than us, doesn't mean you can be so selfish" (<https://www.myoshinji.or.jp/houwa/archive/youth/072>). Then Ayukawa clearly states that humanity can show wisdom by expressing gratitude to nature and handing down to future generations a beautiful planet earth.

"Plants, trees, and the land will all become buddhas." "All existence is buddha nature." In Japanese Buddhism, all forms of existence—even mountains, rivers, plants, and trees—are manifestations of the same life of the Buddha. The philosopher Takeshi Umehara (1925–2019) emphasized the urgent need for this idea to become common to all humanity, so that people fully experience the blessings of nature and regain the mind of reverence.

Human beings have a bad habit of not reflecting deeply until they are really in trouble, but I think that as soon as possible—and before we get into trouble—we all need to realize how thankful we should be for the sun, air, and water, and seriously reevaluate our way of life.

The Joy of Being Able to Express Gratitude

When I went to the Ogasawara Islands some time ago, I remember being moved by watching the beautiful sunrise and sunset above the horizon from the ferry because this cleansed my mind and at the same time made me feel strongly that I was being caused to live by nature. There is nothing unusual about people being moved by coming into contact with plants and flowers growing to their fullest in a garden. Sometimes we find the courage to live from the vigor of dandelions blooming in the cracks of the asphalt, which I believe is also a sign of the oneness of all life. A psychiatrist said that by bringing our minds closer to and feeling oneness with flowers and plants, we often gain a sense of relief and are invigorated. So mentally, as well as physically, we should be grateful to many things in nature, including the sun, water, and air.

When people really understand this, they lead lives of moderation. For example, they realize that the dishes of food on the table are there thanks to the sun and water, so they eat moderately, do not waste food, and leave nothing on their plates, just as they try to use precious resources such as water with care. So even when there are minor inconveniences and shortages, or some time and effort need to be expended, if you have the mind of gratitude, you can accept those things joyfully. And when we maintain the mind of gratitude, we are liberated.

If your mind is full of dissatisfaction or anger, feeling grateful may be quite difficult, but if you reflect on the law of nature (the Truth) and thoughts of thankfulness come welling forth from within you, then even in the midst of hardships, you will be able to express gratitude and find happiness—which will liberate your mind from suffering.

For one thing, we were born as human beings with the capability of realizing the Truth, so we could say that the very fact that we are alive right now is something for which to be truly grateful. Let's continue to transmit and share with everyone the joy that Rissho Kosei-kai has passed down since its founding and join everyone in protecting the earth that resonates with all our expressions of gratitude.

From *Kosei*, March 2025



Interview

Aiming to Create a Workplace Where Individual Responsibility and Consideration for Others Are in Harmony

Mr. Rathnayake Sudath, Rissho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka

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

I became a member of Rissho Kosei-kai in 2010, guided by my mother-in-law, who is head of a family *hoza*. The present building of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center was completed in June 2017 and is about a fifteen-minute drive from my home. However, when I became a member, the former Dharma center was far from home, so I would take my mother-in-law to the Dharma center on my motorbike, which took about an hour and a half, and then go to work from there. Sometimes when I went into the Dharma center, I could see a solemn statue of *Gohonzon*, the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni as the “focus of devotion,” enshrined in the hall, and the sangha members would always greet me with smiles and their palms together in prayer. The warm atmosphere made me feel at home. Sri Lanka is a country where many people believe in Theravada Buddhism, so there are beautiful Buddha statues in temples, but the *Gohonzon* of Rissho Kosei-kai gave me the impression of something that made me feel at peace. I became interested in Rissho Kosei-kai and its teachings, and I gradually began to take part in Dharma center activities.



Mr. Sudath plays a wooden gong as a subleader of sutra recitation during the Youth Seminar, held at the Sri Lanka Dharma Center.



Mr. Sudath delivers his Dharma Journey talk at the Sri Lanka Dharma Center.

After that, you continued to practice the Dharma, and in 2023, you received the Gohonzon, didn't you?

Receiving the *Gohonzon* was my long-cherished wish. After the *Gohonzon* bestowal ceremony at the Sri Lanka Dharma Center, Minister Rev. Hironobu Suzuki visited my home to perform the enshrinement ceremony. Many sangha members also attended the ceremony that day, making it a day of joy and gratitude for me. Since receiving the *Gohonzon*, I have felt embraced by the Buddha's great compassion during the morning and evening sutra recitation, and I can work at my workplace in peace and tranquility. When I get home, I offer thanks to the Buddha for the day.

Even if there are problems at work, I can live peacefully without letting them get to me. I believe that is also the merit of the sutra recitation.

What kind of work do you do now?

I am now working as a manager at a restaurant in Colombo, where I oversee a staff of about fifty people in the kitchen, hall, and reception. Colombo is Sri Lanka's largest city and economic center, so a large number of people enjoy sightseeing and shopping. Thanks to that, the restaurant where I work attracts tourists from all over the country and abroad every day.

What are some of the things you are doing in your workplace to put the teachings into practice?

After learning the teachings of "If one changes, others will change" and "Guide people by example" at Rissho Kosei-kai, I have made it a priority to change myself, rather than giving detailed instructions to the staff. As the person in charge, I have tried to set an example for them. For instance, when it comes to trash disposal, rather than giving verbal instructions, I first take action to show them the correct way to dispose of trash.

In addition, teamwork is essential in a workplace where people with different personalities work



Mr. Sudath with his wife and son before the family altar, following the enshrinement ceremony.

together. For this reason, I have always valued the harmony I learned at Rissho Kosei-kai. Aiming to create a workplace where individual responsibility and consideration for others are in harmony, I have tried to think about how I can help staff members cooperate and work together in harmony while taking responsibility for their own work and how I can change myself to achieve this. Currently, the staff members work together as a team, recognizing one another's abilities and characteristics, and as a result, trust has deepened and teamwork has become stronger.

Are there any particular passages in the Lotus Sutra that you hold close to your heart?

Whenever I recite chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra, "The Life Span of the Eternal Tathagata," morning and evening, the passage "I always abide here teaching the Dharma" resonates in my heart. The passage means that the Buddha is always with us, watching over us and teaching us to be liberated. It also teaches that while the life of the Buddha is eternal, our lives are also eternal. Chapter 16 allows me to believe that, if we diligently practice the teachings, we who inherit the life of the Buddha can eventually attain the realm of the Buddha. I would like to continue my diligence in my everyday life, feeling within my mind and body



Rev. Hironobu Suzuki (left), minister of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center, leads sutra recitation at the ceremony for enshrining Gohonzon, the "focus of devotion," in the home of Mr. Sudath (right). Fellow sangha members also participated in the ceremony.

the eternal life of the Buddha and reminding myself that the Buddha is always with us.

Please tell us what you think is best about becoming a member of Rissho Kosei-kai.

The sangha members of Rissho Kosei-kai greet everyone at anytime with smiles and their palms placed together. Due to long-standing habits and a bit of shyness, I never greeted people until they greeted me. However, now I can actively greet my family and the staff members at my workplace. I am grateful that I could change my mind and behavior like that thanks to joining Rissho Kosei-kai and learning its teachings.

Finally, please tell us your goals for your practice.

My greatest wish is for my wife to visit the Sri Lanka Dharma Center and practice with me. My wife works as a public servant and is busy with her work, so she attends *hoza* at home, but she doesn't come to the Dharma center. I would like her to come to the center with me, listen to Rev. Suzuki's Dharma talk, and participate in *hoza* with other sangha members. For this to happen, I need to further devote myself to learning and practicing the Buddha's teachings at home so that my wife will understand the splendor of Rissho Kosei-kai and its teachings.



Mr. and Mrs. Sudath celebrate their son's university graduation in October 2024.



An Introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai Through Comics

Peace Activities of Rissho Kosei-kai

Religions for Peace

There are many different religions in the world, but all faiths wish for world peace. Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, established Religions for Peace with other religious leaders in Japan and around the world to discuss what they could do to realize world peace and take action together.

Since the First World Assembly of Religions for Peace was convened in Kyoto, Japan, in 1970, Religions for Peace has held its periodic world assembly almost every four years. In 2006, the year Rissho Kosei-kai celebrated the centennial anniversary of Founder Niwano's birth, the Eighth World Assembly was held in Kyoto.



The kanji character on the panel: Path

Did You Know?

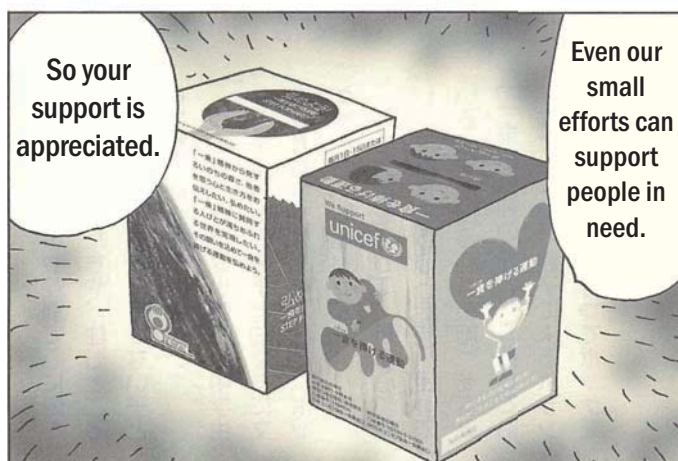
In the First World Assembly of Religions for Peace, religious people discussed what they should do about global issues such as disarmament, development, and human rights. Since then, Religions for Peace has also worked on issues such as the environment, education, and gender inequality.



The Donate-a-Meal Movement

There are many people in the world dying from hunger and suffering from illnesses caused by malnutrition. The Donate-a-Meal Movement was inaugurated to support people in need and aim for a world in which everyone can live happily together. This movement invites people to reflect on the suffering of others and pray for an end to hunger and illness.

Members of Rissho Kosei-kai forgo a meal, or personal indulgences, on the first and fifteenth of every month and donate the money they save to the Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace through their local Dharma centers. Their donations are used for the movement's support activities inside and outside Japan.



Did You Know?

The origin of this movement dates back to the Edo period. It is said that during the great Tempo famine, thought to have lasted from 1833 to 1837, Inoue Masakane (1790–1849), founder of Misogikyo*, embarked on a relief activity for people who were starving with his vow to “skip one meal” to give to them; it was the beginning of the movement.

*Misogikyo is now one of twelve Shinto groups (Sect Shinto) that are independent from mainstream Shrine Shinto.



Chapter 1 Living by Aspiring: Your Point of Departure

Making the World a Great Big Sangha

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



A Sangha That Resonates with Buddha Nature

Looking at our relationship with the Buddha as that of parent and child, it becomes clear that the realm of faith consists of the mutual resonance between the Buddha and people, and between people themselves. But actually, mutual resonance is not limited to the realm of faith. The entire universe arises through interdependence, the mutual resonance of all things with all other things, and this is true of every aspect of human society.

Now, what is it that elevates and beautifies to perfection the dynamics of mutual resonance among human beings? Needless to say, it is love. And it must also be compassion. Love calls forth love, and compassion nurtures compassion.

The other day, I came across a heartwarming story in an editorial of the *Chugai Nippo* newspaper. It was based on a submission to the “Moments in Time” (Jpn., *Hitotoki*) feature of the Asahi News. The story tells of a Catholic nun living in Fukushima City who traveled to Tokyo. While at the station preparing to return to Fukushima, she was approached by an unkempt man asking for money.

Catholic sisters, like the Buddhist monks and nuns of old, are not permitted to personally possess money. Even when they leave the convent to run errands, they are only given the bare minimum of funds necessary. Taken aback by the man’s request, she took out a small purse, did



the math in her head, and said to him, “After deducting the train fare for my return trip, this is all I can give you.” With that, she handed the man all the change she could spare.

Seeing the small amount of change she had given him, the man was surprised and said, “This much can’t even buy a boxed lunch. I have more money than you do, so let me give you this,” and he took out a 1,000-yen bill. Of course, the sister declined at first, but in the end, she had no choice but to accept it with the words “Thank you.” The editorial says that the people around them who had been watching their conversation then broke into warm applause at what they had witnessed.

The person who submitted the story concluded by writing, “That man must have reflected on the joy of having given to another, and it may have led to a new starting point for a life of giving.”

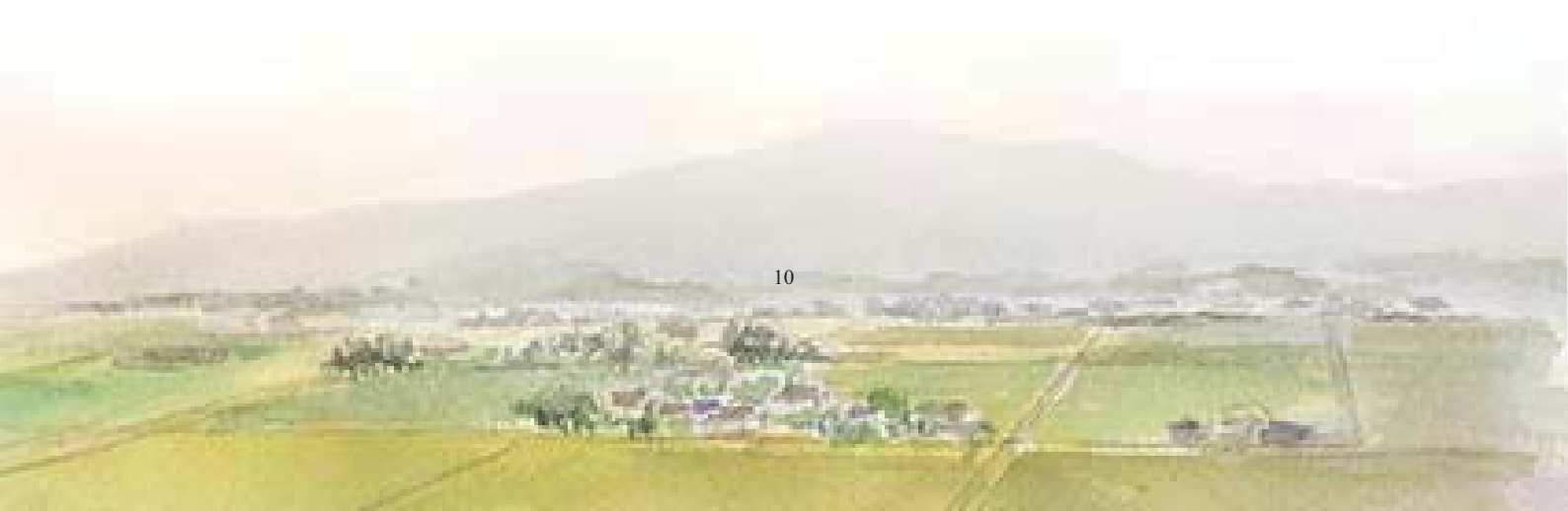
I read this and thought, “Ahh! The Buddha’s teaching that all people have buddha nature is truly real!” I was deeply moved, as if realizing it for the first time.

In today’s world, we hear far too many raunchy and base stories. The media tends to report such stories, which makes it difficult for beautiful stories like this one, which must be happening all over the place, to reach our ears. I believe this hinders the dynamic of mutual resonance from developing, where humanitarian love begets humanitarian love.

As people of faith, we must not turn a blind eye to the ugly side of society, but we should focus our attention on the parts of those stories where buddha nature brilliantly shines forth, even if just for an instant. The mutual resonance of sharing these stories and being deeply moved together elevates our humanity to another level.

Rissho Kosei-kai is a sangha that aspires to the dynamic of mutual resonance among human beings. First, let us bring this sangha to perfection. Then, let us expand that dynamic infinitely, with the dream and ideal of human society as a great Sangha. For the perfection of the Buddha Way lies in this very endeavor.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 67–68



Director's Column

Learning from Nature

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. As we enter March, the weather is gradually becoming warmer in Japan. This month, we will be holding a ceremony to commemorate the eighty-seventh anniversary of the founding of Rissho Kosei-kai, and we will also be starting a special program to celebrate the eighty-eighth birthday of President Niwano (to be held eight times throughout the year). So it looks like March will be a month full of fun events.

The theme of the President's message for this month is "Being Grateful for Nature." I have read it over and over again, reflecting on the profound meaning of the words, and made a vow to work hard to overcome my bad habit of not reflecting deeply until I am really in trouble, and to make the Buddha's wisdom my own. I reflected on the significance of "being caused to live" and "living with a sense of gratitude and humility" in the season when nature's vitality begins to return.

I was also reminded of the poem by the Edo-period agrarian reformer, philosopher, and economist Ninomiya Sontoku, who the President often quotes: "Without sound or fragrance, the heaven and earth endlessly expound the unwritten sutra." This month, receiving the changing of the seasons through my five senses, starting with the sprouting of plants as the words of the sutra, I would like to ask myself whether my way of life is in line with the law of nature and continue to devote myself to my practice.



Rev. Akagawa participates in the midwinter sutra recitation practice during his visit to the Busan chapter of Rissho Kosei-kai of Korea on January 18.



Donate-a-Meal Movement

The Donate-a-Meal Movement by Rissho Kosei-kai celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year. In honor of this milestone, we are sharing more about this initiative every other month throughout the year.

Let Your Heart Rejoice

1. The Style of Practice

Anyone Can Participate Anytime, Anywhere, in Any Way, and for an Unlimited Length of Time

The Donate-a-Meal Movement does not aim to offer our surplus food but to share something valuable and necessary for us all.

The core principles of the movement are Empathy, Prayer, and Donation. Based on these three principles, the movement is shaped by the practice of skipping a meal, praying for the happiness of people around the world, and making a donation while sparing a thought for people who do not have enough to eat.

However, “a meal” does not necessarily mean the meal on our tables. With today’s diverse lifestyles, people’s values and things they cherish are also varied. Just as the things that enrich our lives differ from person to person, the ways we show our thought and care should also be unique to each of us.

Why don’t we put these three principles into practice in a way that suits us? Let’s expand the circle of kindness through a My Personal Donate-a-Meal Practice that aligns with our hearts.

2. The Four Steps of Practice

STEP 1: Choose Your Personal Donate-a-Meal Practice

Decide what you will practice: When will you practice it? What will you share?

Consider a practice that fits your lifestyle, such as

skipping one meal out of three, refraining from indulging in something you enjoy, or sharing something that is important to you.

Examples:

■ Skipping a meal or snack

- Skipping lunch once a week
- Refraining from snacks or coffee shop visits at least once or a few times a month
- On Sundays, sharing a single piece of bread with family members to experience the importance of sharing

■ Choosing something other than meals to share, based on your lifestyle

- Avoiding in-game purchases twice a month
- Giving up a monthly nail salon visit
- Going to bed early on weekends, instead of staying up late, and donating the saved electricity costs (caring for yourself while also supporting those in need)
- Walking one stop instead of taking the bus or train and donating the saved fare (sharing the joy of looking after your health)

■ Setting special days to practice

- On a day when a happy event occurs (as an act of sharing joy)
- On special personal days, like family or friends’ birthdays or anniversaries
- On days when your favorite TV show airs





STEP 2: Make the Personal Sacrifice You Chose

Sacrifice something that is essential to your life. By experiencing a brief moment of hunger or deprivation, reflect on the struggles of those facing poverty and conflict daily.

STEP 3: Pray for the Happiness of People Around the World

Pray for the happiness of those in distress, and pray for world peace.

In Rishso Kosei-kai, we reflect on what we can do to help, and we offer the following prayer with the wish to be of service:

Words of Prayer

I pray:

Let there be peace on earth

Let more people be considerate of others

Let it begin with me

(Moment of silence)

The style of prayer is not limited to offering the above Words of Prayer. Feel free to express your thoughts and wishes in the way that is most meaningful and appropriate for you.

STEP 4: Make a Donation

Donate the amount you saved to organizations that support people suffering from poverty and conflict.

If you wish to make a donation through Rishso Kosei-kai's Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace, please contribute to the following account:

Donate-a-Meal Fund for Peace Donation Information

Bank: Mizuho Bank, Nakano Branch

Account Type: Savings Account (USD)

Account Number: 9115262

Name of the Account Holder: RISSHO
KOSEI-KAI ICHIJIKI HEIWAKIKIN

(We are currently considering online payment transfer methods.)

Alternatively, you may donate to an organization in your local community or a group that promotes activities you personally support. By making donations, we can not only provide assistance to others but also cultivate a heart that appreciates and finds contentment in what we have.

3. The Movement That Rejoices the Heart Through Donating a Meal: What Matters Most in the Movement Today

When we take action to help someone and receive a heartfelt "thank you," we feel a sense of joy. Equally, or even more so, we may feel a great sense of happiness and pride in ourselves. This is when our compassion is expressed and nurtured within us.

When you practice donating, take a moment to reflect on your own feelings—the pain of giving up something you want, the warmth that gently spreads through your heart, and the sense of accomplishment from fulfilling your commitment. What kind of emotions do you have in your heart?

The Donate-a-Meal Movement is an initiative that benefits others in the world, but it is also a voluntary and independent practice that makes your own heart happy. We hope to share this experience of donating a meal and rejoicing our hearts with as many people as possible.



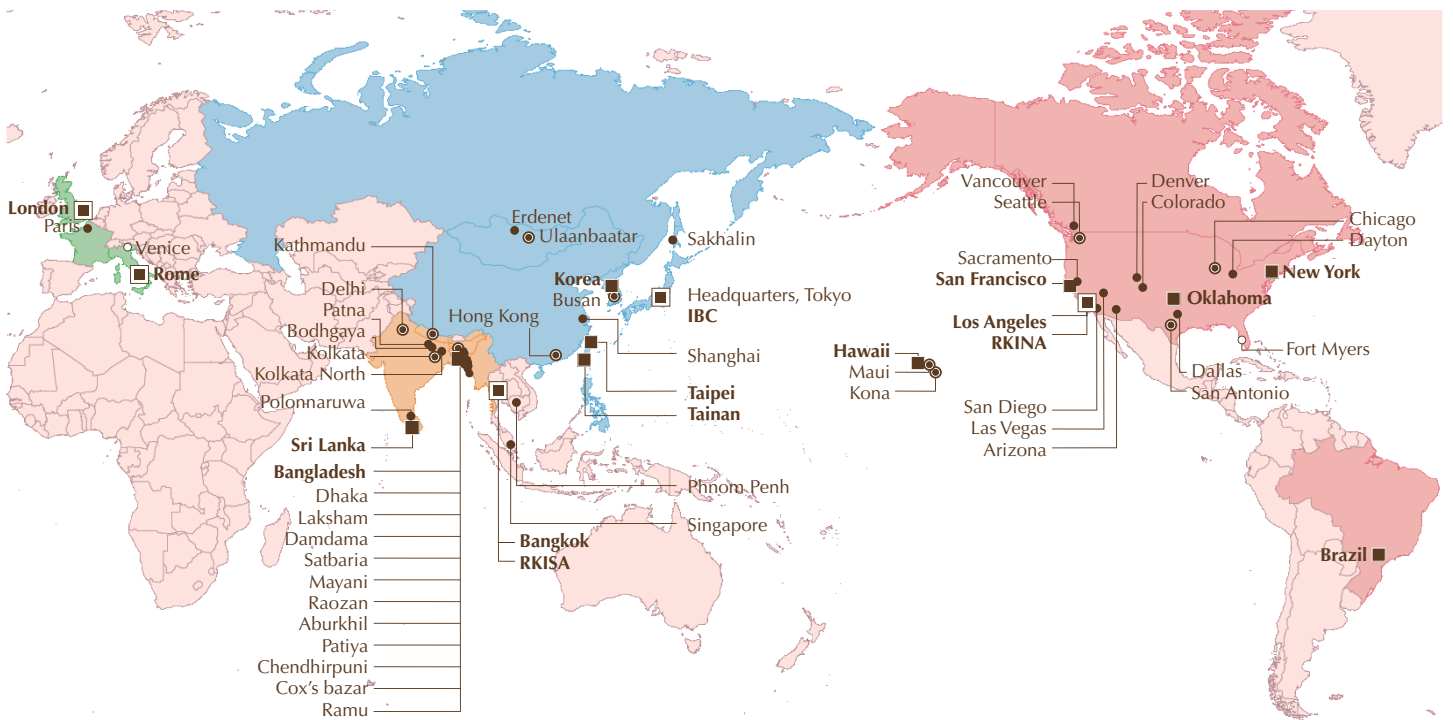
Children at a refugee camp in Uganda

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