

Living the Lotus 12

Buddhism in Everyday Life

2025
VOL. 243



International Buddhist Congregation (IBC) of Rissho Kosei-kai

A Buddhist community for foreign residents of Japan—living Buddhism and connecting hearts



Dharma home visits



One-day retreat



Dharma circle practice



**Flower
arranging class**



Japanese class

Living the Lotus Vol. 243 (December 2025)

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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.

A Harmony Played by Everyone Part Two: The Roles and Awareness Expected of Us

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



We Are Already in a State of Harmony

According to Kazuo Murakami, professor emeritus at the University of Tsukuba, “Our internal organs are capable of functioning because as their cells are working, they are helping each other. And while our organs are functioning, they are also helping other organs” (*Chichi*, January 2011). In last month’s issue, in light of the current state of the world and what is important for us now, I touched on the mindset that disrupts harmony between people and countries. At the cellular level within our bodies, it is quite natural that each cell is helping every other cell and maintaining harmony. Taking this into consideration, it seems logical to say that world peace is possible if only we human beings can unleash our innate power of harmony, just as our cells do. But, as everyone knows, this is not an easy task.

That said, I believe that if even the first of the following things were achieved, human harmony and world peace would no longer merely be dreams: If all of us spend every day of our lives in gratitude and all of our family members live in harmony, we will have a positive influence on our neighbors, leading to amiable interactions between the people of our communities. Furthermore, a country that is peaceful—where everyone can lead their lives with peace of mind—gains the trust of other countries and builds harmonious relationships with them.

As I have been saying for some time regarding the Confucian saying “refine yourself, keep your family in order, manage your country, and make the world peaceful,” I think that we should particularly value the principle of “keeping your family in order” because caring for the health of our “cells” (that is, our families) leads to world peace. I believe that the family is like a seedbed because only when family members have good relationships with each other can they cultivate personalities that discern the way of humanity. Eventually, people who have been raised this way will bring forth the fruit of world peace.

The True Meaning of a Patriotic Mind

Incidentally, what sorts of roles are all of you playing from day to day in your families and communities and at your schools and workplaces? Are you aware of the kind of work you do and actions you take that help other people? The reason I ask this question is that, following the example of our cells, when all of us are playing our own roles and doing things that benefit others, we are maintaining harmony.

Therefore, in order to be in tune with those around us and create a beautiful harmony, it is first important to know and draw upon our own strengths and fulfill our roles as best we can. Next, it is important that we listen carefully to the voices and feelings of others. In order to fully utilize our own strengths, we should all imagine ourselves as members of a symphony orchestra, listening to each other's voices and feelings and taking great pains not to play too loudly or out of tune. Doing so will produce a harmony that puts everyone at ease. In addition, if we can all sincerely say to one another “thank you,” “it’s all thanks to you,” “we’re all in this together,” and “I’m sorry”—phrases that the theoretical physicist Haruo Saji teaches us are “words that save society from chaos”—then we will surely be able to maintain that harmony for a long time.

Furthermore, Founder Niwano asserted that “people who don’t truly love their own country can’t expect people around the world to honestly sympathize with them.” In other words, patriotism among the people of a given country is a prerequisite for harmony with other nations. However, this kind of patriotism is not based on nationalism or hegemony, which tends to lead to war. Rather, it is your mind praying and wanting, out of love for your homeland, to make your country truly peaceful. This is the mindset that hopes to hand down to our children and grandchildren a country in which they can live with peace of mind and that willingly cooperates with others. We human beings cannot wage war against one another knowing that all of the people in another country have the same love for their country that we do for our own. In other words, this patriotism means having respect for others and, at times, it even becomes a dynamic force for improving ourselves through self-reflection and humility.

We should all be the kind of people who never forget the true way of life for humanity—that is, loving our own countries and cherishing other people—by making ourselves the light and making the Dharma our light. Then we can bring to the world the happiness of sharing with each other instead of taking from each other and entrust the next generation with such a world.

From *Kosei*, December 2025



I Hope to Connect Many People to the Teachings of the Lotus Sutra Through Social Media

Ms. Cendrawati

International Buddhist Congregation (IBC) of Rissho Kosei-kai

When and why did you come to Japan?

After I graduated from high school in Medan, Sumatra Island, Indonesia in July 2016, I applied for a scholarship from the Japanese government's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, motivated by my long-standing admiration for Japan. In December 2016, I passed the required test, and in April 2017, at the age of eighteen, I came to Japan as an international scholarship student.

First, I studied Japanese at a language school, and later I learned accounting at a vocational college. In April 2020, I transferred to the Faculty of Economics at Komazawa University and graduated in March 2022. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most classes and exams were conducted online, which made it difficult to make friends through university clubs or enjoy the on-campus life I had been looking forward to.

Currently, I work for a company in Tokyo that exports Japanese food products and imports wine. I occasionally go on domestic and overseas business trips as part of my work.

How and when did you join Rissho Kosei-kai?

I joined Rissho Kosei-kai in March 2019, and it all began with a fortune slip. During the New Year's holidays of 2018 and 2019, I went to the shrine for the first shrine visit of the year and drew a fortune slip. Strangely enough, the exact words were written on it for two years in a row: "Draw closer to the gods." Nearly 90 percent of Indonesians are Muslim, but in Medan, where I lived, there are many Buddhists and Buddhist temples. As a Buddhist, I took the words in the fortune slip as an important message from the Buddha, immediately searched online for a Buddhist community, and found the IBC website. Then I contacted the IBC through email and attended the Sunday service for the first time. When I visited the training hall of Rissho Kosei-kai, located at the former headquarters, I was delighted by how warmly



Ms. Cendrawati (front row, center) visits the exhibition of Buddhist sculptures by Unkei at the Tokyo National Museum with English-speaking members of the IBC.

the members of the IBC welcomed me. Seeing the spacious tatami-mat room in the training hall also gave me a strong impression of Japanese culture, which remains vivid in my memory.

Please tell us what you have learned through the events and activities of the IBC.

The IBC holds gatherings for English-speaking members every weekend. During the ceremony held the fourth Sunday of each month, I perform the role of reading the text of the day's lecture by the IBC Dharma teacher Rev. Masatoshi Kohno and the words of Founder Nikkyo Niwano. I am often surprised by how closely the messages in these readings reflect my current state of mind. I always feel as if they are speaking directly to me, offering the exact guidance I need at that moment. These experiences have deepened my understanding of the teachings and given me many new realizations in daily life. Moreover, at the Bon gathering held in July this year, after we enjoyed Bon dance, we sang Michael Jackson's "Heal the World" together, which I had selected. I felt our hearts were united in a prayer for peace, wishing to heal the world. It was a very touching moment.

Are you proficient in Japanese, English, and Mandarin?

My hometown of Medan has a high proportion of Chinese residents from Fujian Province, and many people speak Hokkien. So my mother tongue is Hokkien, and the official language is Indonesian. I also learned Mandarin, English, Korean, and Japanese. Furthermore, since my mother is hard of hearing, I have communicated with her using gestures and expressions since I was young. This experience allowed me to learn sign language naturally.

Please tell us about the teachings of the Buddha you treasure.

The teaching I treasure most is that all things are transient. It reveals the truth that everything in this world is constantly changing, and nothing remains the same forever. This teaching reminds me that sorrow and suffering will not last forever, and that even joy is not something to cling to. When I first learned it, I felt an incredible sense of relief, as if a weight had been lifted from my heart, freeing me from attachment. It continues to guide me toward living each day with gratitude, balance, and a positive mind.

Are there any teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai you keep in your mind?

While participating in the Dharma circle (*hoza*) with the IBC, I was deeply moved by the teaching that when we change ourselves, others will change as well. In daily life, when we encounter someone who we find difficult to deal with, our natural reaction is often to avoid communicating with them. However, Rissho Kosei-kai teaches that even such a person possesses buddha nature and that we should learn to see and respect it within them. Therefore, instead of trying to change others, it is important to first reflect on our own hearts, recognize what needs to be

improved within ourselves, and make sincere efforts to change. I feel truly grateful to have learned such a positive and compassionate way of living.

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

I'm drawn to how the community warmly and gently welcomes everyone at any time, with an everyone-is-welcome spirit. By joining the Dharma circle, I can learn the path to liberation and the way of life based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, while we share experiences, suffering, sorrow, pain, and joy with each other. I also believe mutual trust and strong bonds among members arise from having the same faith.

Finally, what are your hopes and dreams for the future?

As part of my public relations activities, I actively share images of lotus flowers and Buddha statues accompanied by soothing background music on social media. Recently, we have also been discussing the creation of an IBC youth team. At present, there are more than a dozen English-speaking members, and our goal is to strengthen our online presence to spread the teachings of the Buddha and Rissho Kosei-kai to more people, especially the younger generations. I hope this social media platform will become a place of healing and connection—a network through which many people can be guided and liberated by the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

In the future, although I am not sure how capable I will be, I hope to use my multilingual skills to contribute, even in a small way, to international dissemination through volunteer work, translating or interpreting.



Ms. Cendrawati (fourth from right in the second row) attends Bon Festival held by the IBC.

Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now

The Mutual Inclusion of the Ten Realms

Dr. Dominick Scarangelo



Continuing from last month, we are delighted to share the next installment of *Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now* by Dr. Dominick Scarangelo, the International Advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai. *Sokuze Dojo* is inspired by chapter 21 of the Lotus Sutra and conveys the principle of “Meditation on the Place of the Way”—the insight that any place can be a place of practice. This teaching warmly reminds us that we can live the Dharma in our everyday lives—whether at home, at work, or at school.

In October and November, we learned about the ten realms—the six realms, or mindsets, of suffering and the four realms of awakening. As Founder Niwano taught, we can never attain liberation from suffering within the “burning house” of the six realms; to reach true happiness, we must ascend to the realms of awakening.

But ascending to the realms of awakening sounds difficult. Sometimes those realms can seem so far away from our ordinary states of mind.

However, awakening is not far away. That’s because we can discover the realms of awakening right within the realms of delusion.

Consider the realm of hells—anger. We become angry when we feel someone isn’t treating us right or when we think the world is unfair to us. What we want is for others to care for us and for the world to look after us. We want to be loved. But when we feel that we haven’t received the care and kindness we deserve, the gap between aspiration and reality kindles feelings of anger. But notice that behind anger is a longing for its opposite—loving kindness. This is a seed of the realm of bodhisattvas found within the realm of hells.

Let’s take another example: the greed of the realm of hungry spirits. Paradoxically, the aspiration for contentment is actually at the base of our greed. Why does a person gorge themselves? They are responding to the desire to be satisfied. But because we are ignorant and lack the Buddha’s wisdom, we try to achieve contentment through consumption. We think we’ll be satisfied if we just consume, or buy, one more thing, but our satisfaction is fleeting. So, we try again and again, consuming to excess. However, the aspiration for satisfaction behind the realm of hungry spirits, the mind of greed, is a seed for the tranquil contented

-ness characteristic of all the mindsets of awakening.

These are just two examples showing the Buddha’s teaching that each of the ten realms (mindsets) contains all the other realms. All ten realms interpenetrate one another. This is called the “mutual inclusion of the ten realms.” We can reach the realms of awakening precisely because they are already present within the realms of suffering and delusion in which we so often find ourselves. All we have to do is actualize them.

But how?

The passage of the *Kyoten* (sutra readings) from the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings gives us important guidance on how to do this. For instance, if I have fallen into the realm of hells and my view is obscured by anger, I can make a point of practicing compassion. This could be something as easy as brightening the world of a sad-looking person with a kind smile. If I have fallen into the greedy mindset of the realm of hungry spirits, then I can make sure that I practice generosity. I could donate a few coins to the charity box I come across on the street or forgo a meal in solidarity with people facing food insecurity and donate that money to the Donate-a-Meal Movement. If a self-centered envy of others leads me into the realm of asuras, I can instead strive to rejoice for others. In my conversations with the people in my life, I can focus more on what’s going on in their lives and offer congratulatory words that let them know I share their joy.

When I perform acts of compassion, donation, or sharing the joy of others, I’m transported to the realm of bodhisattvas. That’s because compassion, generosity, and joy are already there, even within anger, greed, and jealousy. What is required of us is that we are diligently introspective, always honestly

acknowledging where our minds are at. If we realize we are wandering in a realm of delusion, that will naturally call forth a spark of the aspiration to change—to reach a realm of awakening. In that very moment of realization, I’ve discovered the realm of awakening that was dormant within the realm of delusion. But to enter that realm of awakening, I have to respond by practicing as the Buddha teaches.

To be honest, despite our efforts, we might not initially feel great compassion, heartfelt generosity, or overwhelming joy for others. Our practice may

even feel forced or insincere, and we may soon fall back into a realm of delusion. But don’t fret. The realms of awakening—our buddha nature—are always present, even within delusion and suffering. And in the moments when we focus on our awakened intentions, keep them in mind, and put them into practice, we are transported, like stepping through a portal, to the realms of awakening. The more we practice, the deeper and more authentic those minds will feel, and the more time we’ll spend in the realms of awakening.

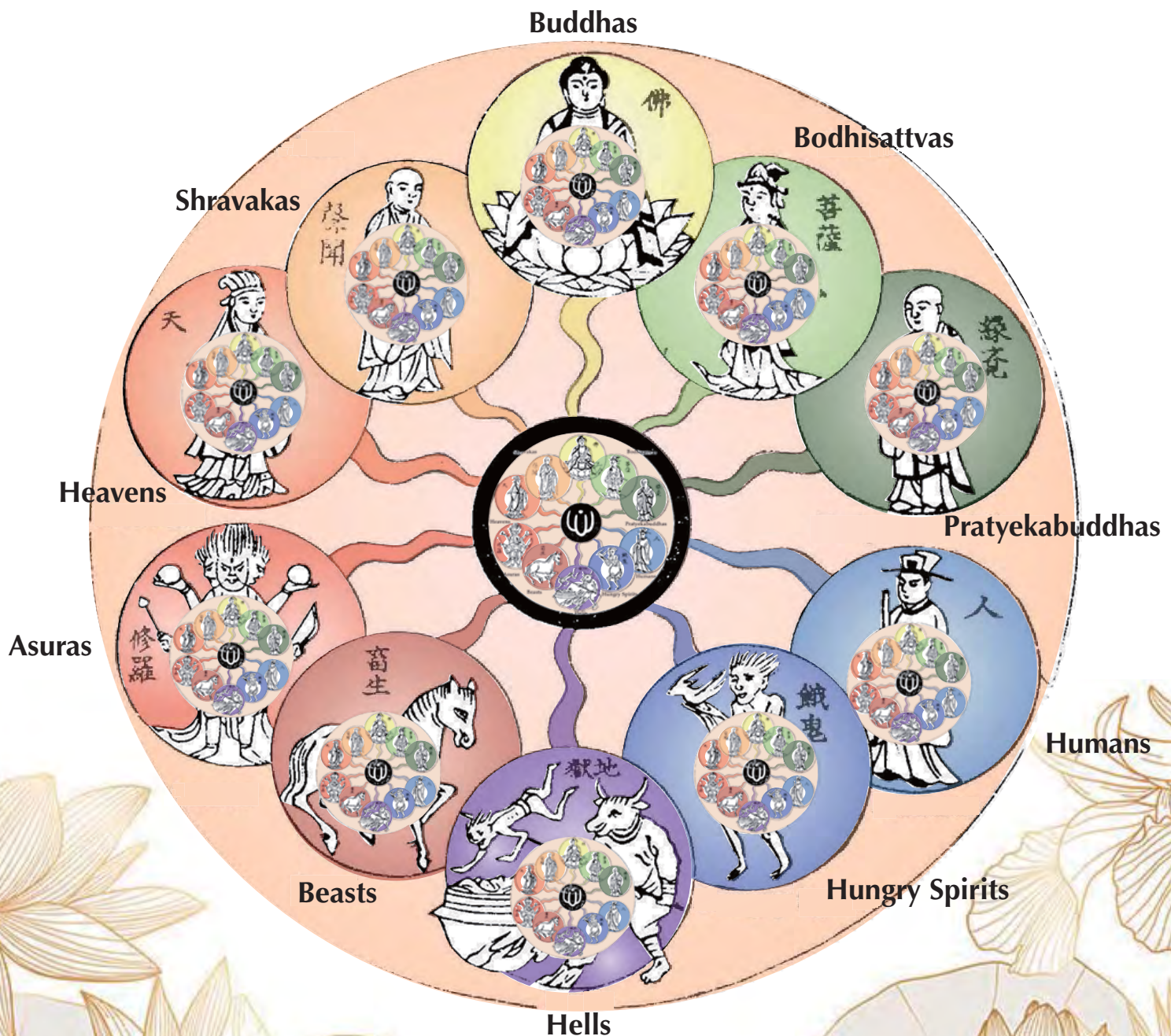


Diagram of the mutual inclusion of the ten realms, based on the diagram of the ten realms contained in the Dainihon Zoku Zokyo.



Field Report from the Sangha

Rev. Dr. Kyohei Mikawa,
Minister, Rissho Kosei-kai of Los Angeles

I remember the day I met this particular office supervisor. Over time, I began to feel that he unfairly criticized my work, and his repeated, unkind remarks traumatized me and left me emotionally drained. After a year, I began experiencing nausea and trembling whenever I sensed his presence. Fear and exhaustion followed me everywhere.

Recognizing this as a crisis, I reached out to a leader at the Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhist Center I belonged to at the time. With my permission, he invited two senior members, and the four of us met weekly for *hoza*—our Dharma practice of reflective group sharing. I remember the relief I felt during the first *hoza* meeting. I poured out my struggles and my disappointment in myself for not coping with the situation. Rather than offering advice or trying to fix anything, they simply listened and asked me gentle questions: “Can you describe how the pain feels when he criticizes or hurts you?” and “What feels most emotionally draining in your communication with him?”

As I spoke, I was surprised by the many words of resentment and anger toward the supervisor coming out of me. It made me realize that I had been suppressing these emotions for a long time. My mind, which had been occupied with resentment and anger, finally found comfort in the compassionate space they created for me. I felt no shame and no fear of being judged. They became a stable mirror, helping me see myself clearly by asking gentle questions without foreseeing an answer or having a motive to steer me in any way they wished.

As they held *hoza* meetings for me over the next few months, I gradually gained a deeper awareness of the nature of my resentment and anger. I realized that what I truly wanted to do was to change my relationship with him by mustering the courage to tell him my truth. I longed to release my emotions in front of him with honesty and kindness to see what might unfold.

One day, I decided to speak directly to my supervi-

sor. I was scared to do so, but I rehearsed what I wanted to say many times at home. Finally, I expressed myself to him honestly but kindly and without accusation. I told him that I felt hurt and asked him to stop treating me that way. He fell silent and said he was shocked, as he had never intended to hurt me.

Then something extraordinary happened. The painful wounds of resentment and anger somehow dissolved. Moreover, to my surprise, he also began to change. His words and behavior toward me became noticeably kinder, although my aim had not been to change him, but rather simply to speak my truth fearlessly and compassionately.

My encounter with the harshness of this supervisor (the hell realm), the resentment and anger that arose within me (the asura realm), and my desire to seek help (the human realm) were different expressions of my *longing*.

What is the fundamental nature of the mind of longing? This question points to the inconceivable nature of human life: whenever we experience suffering, an innate wish for its end somehow arises at the same time. When something brings us discomfort, we naturally seek comfort; when we are cold, we desire warmth. We long to be free from the pain of suffering.

Where does this longing come from? The origin is inconceivable, and yet human nature makes our lives continue, and we strive for the end of suffering for self and others. The nature of longing is, at its root, an innate wish to be free from the pain of suffering, and it is the same as the Buddha’s boundless compassion that is inherent in each one of us. This caring nature is *inherent* and can neither be added nor taken away, regardless of what realm we may be undergoing at any point in life. The mutual inclusion of the ten realms teaches that human nature expressed as longing is itself Buddha’s caring heart that pervades all realms.



Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

Express Your Gratitude for the Buddha's Compassion

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



At a reception for the Chinese and Japanese delegations attending the third General Assembly of Religions for Peace, the Chinese delegates presented a relief of the Buddha's head to Founder Niwano (1979, New York).

Forget Yourself and Put Others First

Incidentally, an important rule when guiding people onto the Buddha Way is to do so with a compassionate heart and the wish “May this person find true happiness.”

Saicho, known as Master Dengyo (literally, “the master who transmits the teaching”), established Enryakuji Temple on Mount Hiei and founded the Tendai school of Japanese Buddhism. It is Master Dengyo who famously said, “Forgetting oneself and benefiting others is the height of compassion.” I would like you to reflect deeply on these words.

Forget about yourself, show kindness to others, and help them resolve their problems—this is the conduct of a bodhisattva.

Until people enter the Dharma, their approach to life lacks direction. They grope around in the dark, turning this way and that, alternating between joy and sorrow in reaction to all the changes in the things around them. But once they enter the Buddha Dharma, they become conscious of a



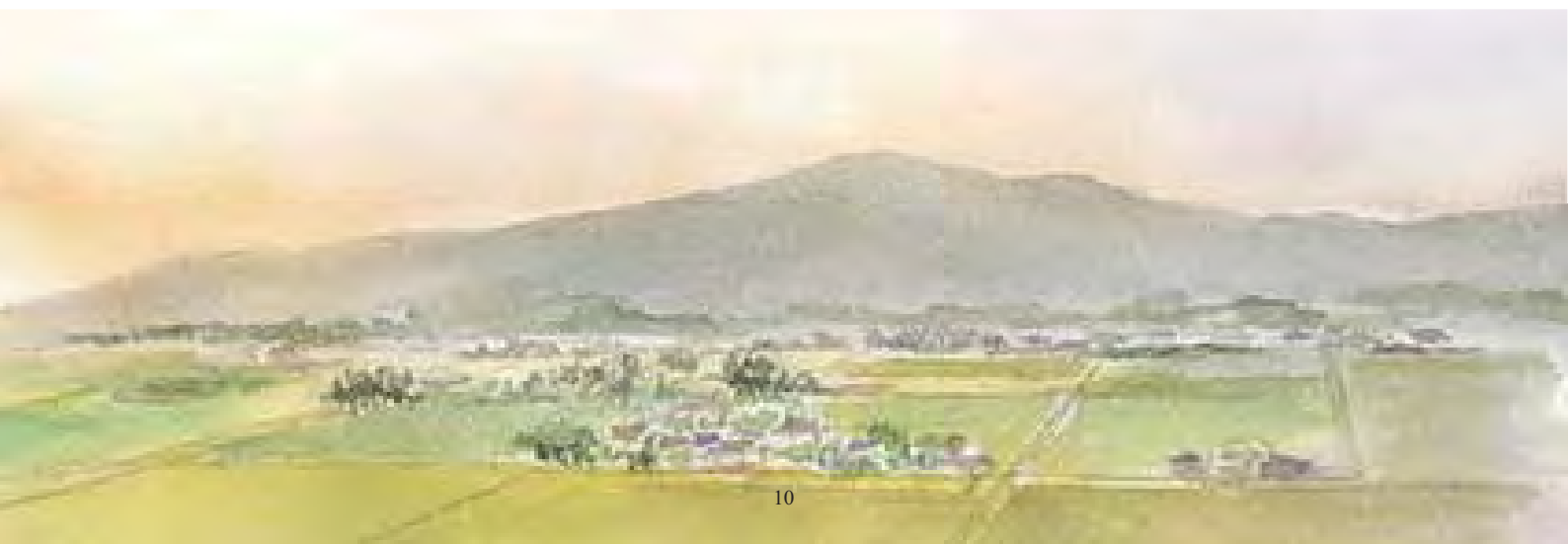
single path in life—the joy of dedicating oneself to others—and this settles their minds. The authentic way to guide others is to do so with a compassionate heart that wishes to put them on this single path.

Most readers have already been guided onto this path by someone who taught them. At its root, that too was the guidance of Shakyamuni, our great benevolent teacher, who is the World-Honored One. But are you all fully conscious of that gracious kindness? If you find it difficult to fully appreciate Shakyamuni's benevolence, I implore you to try guiding even a single person onto the Buddha Way.

Just as in the Japanese saying “People come to understand their parent's love through having their own children,” you can deeply appreciate the debt of gratitude owed to those who guided you when you guide someone yourself. And through that appreciation, you will also truly feel the gracious kindness of Shakyamuni, who is at the root of it all.

As I said before, sharing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra with the wish “May this person find true happiness” is the way to repay the great benevolence of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 88–89



Director's Farewell Message

With Heartfelt Gratitude for the Past Five Years

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International



Rev. Keiichi Akagawa (right) shakes hands with his successor, Rev. Takashi Maeda (left).

I warmly greet you all. The year is drawing to a close once again. Looking back, it feels as though this year passed in the blink of an eye. How are you all feeling as you welcome the busy month of December?

This month, we receive a deeply moving message from the President. He explains to us that a world of harmony, impossible to achieve alone, is built through each person's self-awareness and the fulfillment of their given role. His message echoes the teaching Founder Niwano shared forty years ago: "World peace can actually be achieved more easily than we think. It just requires each person's self-awareness and harmonious actions." Reflecting on this, I feel renewed gratitude, realizing that the President's monthly messages themselves are a manifestation of the President's compassion, continually urging us toward self-awareness.

Furthermore, while expounding on a world of harmony, the President also refers to the workings of human cells. From that passage, the word "other-self," often quoted by the President from Zen master Dogen, comes to mind. "To learn oneself is to forget oneself" means that when we forget ourselves, we become the "other-self" who lives without separation from others; we neither establish ourselves at the expense of others, nor become swept away by others and lose ourselves. The true self manifests here and now as the function that sustains others. I wish continue striving for such a way of life.

On a personal note, I would like to humbly share that due to recent personnel changes within the organization, I have stepped down from my role as director of Rissho Kosei-kai International. Beginning this month, I have assumed a new role as the minister responsible for both the Sri Lanka Dharma Center and the Bangladesh Dharma Center in South Asia. I would also like to introduce my successor, Rev. Takashi Maeda, who has served as the minister of the Itabashi Dharma Center in Tokyo. He is a proven leader with years of extensive experience in both headquarters management and field dissemination work. So everyone, please look forward to his leadership.

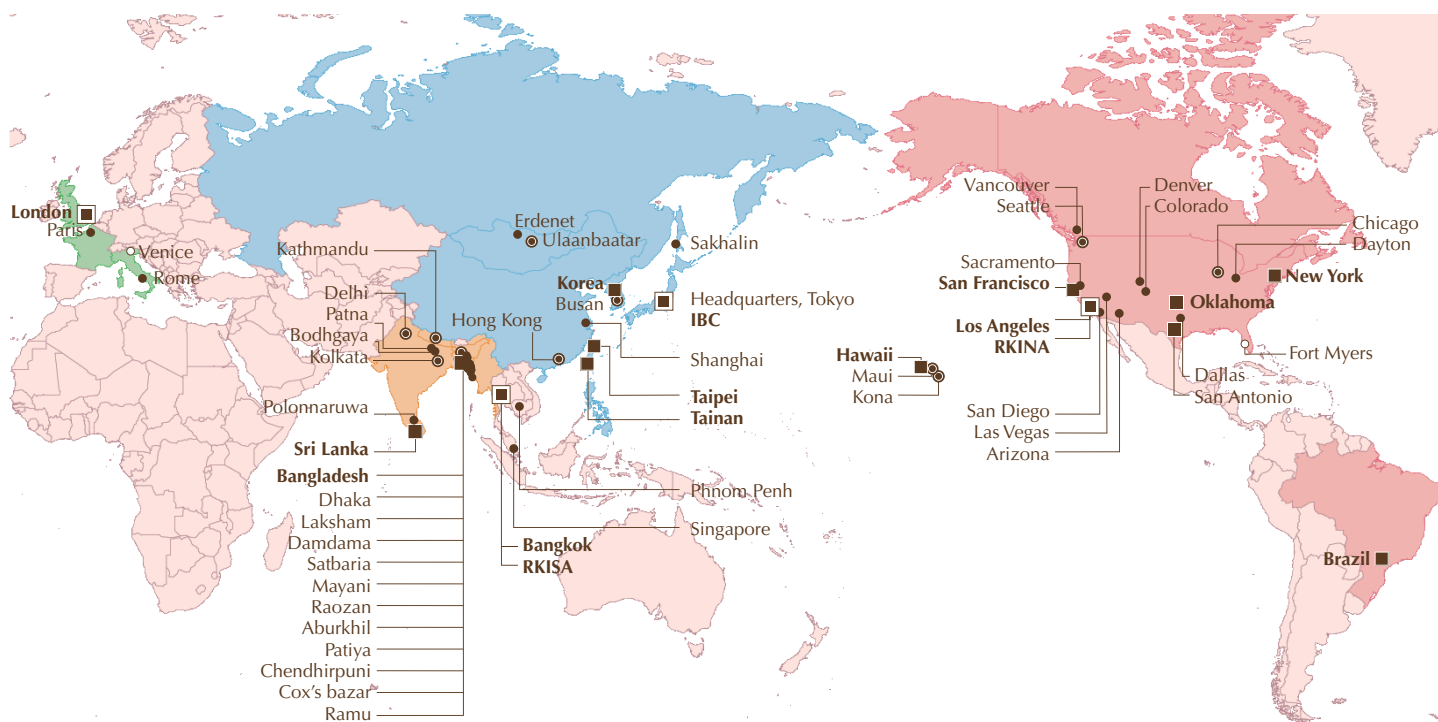
With these personnel changes, I regret to inform you that this will be my final contribution to the "Director's Column." I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all the beloved readers of *Living the Lotus* who have warmly supported me over the past five years.

Going forward, I will continue, as a disseminator of the Dharma, to share and embody the path of lay Buddhism taught to us by the Founder and the President, neither rushing nor resting along the way.

Thank you for your continued support of Rissho Kosei-kai International and *Living the Lotus*.



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