

Living the Lotus 2

Buddhism in Everyday Life

2026
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On December 12, 2025, Rev. Yasutoshi Mori retired, having served as the minister of the Bangladesh Dharma Center since 2023, and Rev. Keiichi Akagawa, former director of Rissho Kosei-kai International, was appointed as the new minister.

The Rissho Kosei-kai Bangladesh Dharma Center Holds Inauguration Ceremony for New Minister

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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.

Learning from Kenji Miyazawa, Part Two: “To the West, If a Mother Is Tired”

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



President Niwano shakes hands with children participating in the Oeshiki Ichijo Festival on October 19, 2025.

Like Bodhisattvas Springing Up Out of the Earth

All of you are probably familiar with Kenji Miyazawa's poem that begins, “Undeclared by the rain,” which—as I mentioned in last month's issue of this magazine—makes me feel as though I am reciting scripture. This month's issue presents the complete text of that poem.

Undeclared by the rain, / Undeclared by the wind, / Undeclared by the snow, or the summer heat. / Keep the body strong / And be free from desire. / Never get angry / And always quietly smile. / Four cups of brown rice, some miso, / And a few vegetables are enough for one day. / Count myself out / Of every consideration. / Watch and listen attentively / And do not forget what has been learned. / Live in a small thatched hut in a meadow, / Shaded by a pine forest. / To the east, if a child is sick, / Go take care of her. / To the west, if a mother is tired, / Go shoulder her sheaves of rice. / To the south, if a man is near death, / Go tell him to have no fear. / To the north, if people argue or bring lawsuits, / Go tell them to stop such foolishness. / When there is drought, shed tears. / When the summer is cold, stagger about in a panic. / Everyone calls me “a useless nobody.” / They do not praise me / And I give them no grief— / Such is the person / I strive to be.

Here, Kenji's resolve, firmly rooted in faith, is expressed so directly and honestly that I can only say “it's amazing.” In particular, I am struck by the passage in which he describes going in any direction—east, west, north, and south. This is his vow to turn his practice into concrete action by rushing to the side of a sick child, taking care of a woman worn out from harvesting rice, explaining the truth about life to a man on his deathbed, and mediating to bring reconciliation to people who are fighting. Indeed, we can see Kenji's strong determination to empathize with other people's suffering and mental anguish by going to them, wherever they

are, and doing whatever he can for them—and this is the mission of people who lead their lives as bodhisattvas in this real, saha world.

Following this poem, Kenji's notebook again shows a diagram of a Lotus Sutra Mandala with the *o-daimoku* (*Namu Myoho Renge Kyo*) at the center, the Tathagata Abundant Treasures and Shakyamuni Buddha on the right and left sides of the *o-daimoku*, and these flanked on either side by two of the four bodhisattvas: Superior Practice, Boundless Practice, Pure Practice, and Steadfast Practice. These four bodhisattvas, the leaders of the bodhisattvas who sprang up out of the earth, embody the Buddha's wishes and actually liberate living beings from suffering. I believe that we can learn a great deal today from Kenji's attitude of thinking about what we can do for other people and empathizing with them.

"Watch and Listen Attentively"

Furthermore, every time I read the lines of the poem that say "Count myself out / Of every consideration. / Watch and listen attentively / And do not forget what has been learned," I always think that all members of Rissho Kosei-kai, especially chapter leaders and area leaders, are practicing this, as a matter of course, in their daily lives.

We believe in other people's buddha nature and listen attentively as they pour out their troubles and worries, without interjecting our own opinions or ideas. This is a crucial time for people to find a way out of suffering and anxiety, and this is our noble bodhisattva practice. Because the speakers are wrapped in the compassion of the listener, as they continue to express their complaints, grief, and sadness, they naturally come to understand what their suffering really is and where its cause comes from, and the weight lifts from their minds as they arrive at a way out of their crisis.

Some time ago, I visited a region affected by ethnic conflict from a civil war. Perhaps I was influenced by Kenji's words when I met with local religious leaders, because I simply listened attentively, and gradually, an atmosphere conducive to dialogue began to develop among them, even though communication had previously been difficult. I believe this happened because as each person expressed their innermost feelings, something akin to God or the Buddha residing within their minds made them realize that they should "stop such foolishness."

As we look at the world, so many people are suffering, and there is not much we can do about it. Although we want to help, it seems we are just "useless nobodies." Even so, Kenji teaches us that while maintaining a broad perspective, we should approach others with the mind of putting our hands together reverently before them and be kind and warmhearted—never forgetting that our seemingly insignificant daily practices are fundamentally connected to solving the root causes of the world's problems and that therefore, we should be diligent and not neglect our daily practices.

From *Kosei*, February 2026



Helping Others Awaken to Their Buddha Nature

Mr. Anup Barua, Kolkata Dharma Center, India

When and how did you first encounter the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai?

I joined the Kolkata Dharma Center of Rissho Kosei-kai in October 2017. It all began with a mysterious dream I had one night. In the dream, a Buddhist priest who appeared to be Japanese spoke to me, saying, “From now on, let us spread the Buddha’s teachings together.”

However, having been born and raised in a Theravada Buddhist family, my religious practice centered on meditation and observing precepts, and I knew little about Mahayana Buddhism, to say nothing of Dharma dissemination. So in the dream, I replied, “I don’t know how to spread the Dharma.” Then the priest gently said to me, “It’s all right. The Buddha’s teachings are the same, so there is nothing to worry about.”

After having that dream, as I had already been slightly interested in Mahayana Buddhism, I searched online for organizations in India that practice Mahayana Buddhism. That is when I learned there was a Buddhist organization called Rissho Kosei-kai in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal. Although Kolkata, the largest city in eastern India, and Andal, where I live, are in the same state, they are actually about 200 kilometers apart. So I asked my relatives in Kolkata to find the telephone number of Mr. Suman Barua, the head of the Kolkata Dharma Center. After that, I met with him.

What were your impressions when you first visited the Kolkata Dharma Center?

When I visited the Dharma center, the first thing that caught my eye was the dignified statue of the Eternal Buddha as the focus of devotion, or “*Gohonzon*,” enshrined at the sacred altar, along with the neatly arranged offerings of fruits and vegetables. This felt



Mr. Anup Barua

very fresh to me and deeply moving. Mr. Suman Barua then explained how to serve at the altar and how the Lotus Sutra, a Mahayana scripture, is recited.

At the first Dharma circle, or *hoza*, I attended, I was struck by how participants opened their hearts and spoke candidly about their personal struggles. I was also touched by how the hoza facilitator responded to them with a heart full of compassion. Witnessing people learning the teachings of the Lotus Sutra together and being connected by deep mutual trust, I thought, “I too want to study the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, apply them in my daily life, and dedicate my service to the happiness of others.” This led me to resolve to join Rissho Kosei-kai.

Interview

You received the Dharma Teacher qualification at the Great Sacred Hall last October. How do you feel about it now?

Receiving the Dharma Teacher qualification was a great joy for me, and I am very proud of it. At the same time, now that what I had been told in my dream, “let us spread the Buddha’s teachings together,” has become reality, I understand this role as Dharma Teacher as a mission entrusted to me to disseminate the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in India, the land where Shakyamuni Buddha was born.

Although India is known as the birthplace of Buddhism, it is unfortunately true that many people today do not know the teachings about wisdom, compassion, and equality that the Buddha expounded. For this reason, I renewed my determination to study the Lotus Sutra deeply and to embody its teachings through daily practice. By doing so, I believe I will be able to share the teachings with greater confidence than before.

Are there any particular teachings from Rissho Kosei-kai that you practice in your daily life?

Previously, when I read *Invisible Eyelashes: Seeing What Is Closest to Us* by Founder Nikkyo Niwano, I was reminded of the importance of seeking spiritual richness through a simple life. In the chapter titled “The Contents of Hotei’s Sack” (Hotei being one of



Mr. Barua (far right) with new members of the Kolkata Dharma Center.



Mr. Barua (far left) joins sutra recitation at a member's home.

the seven deities of luck in Japanese mythology, depicted as a cheerful, contented Buddhist monk carrying a large sack on his back), the Founder writes: “The sack is full of carefully sorted leftovers. Hotei is not a deity who brings good fortune, but rather a Chan [Zen] priest who taught the virtue of frugality. . . . All things, including the food we eat and the tools we use, have a life of their own. When full use is made of a life and it completely manifests its value, it has, in the Mahayana sense of the phrase, ‘attained buddhahood.’”

After reading this book, I began to restrain unnecessary desires such as “I want more of this” or “I want more of that,” and instead tried to be content with what I already have, embracing a simple and frugal lifestyle. For example, I reuse old or unwanted items as resources, compost kitchen scraps such as vegetable and fruit peels for plant cultivation at home, and share compost with farmers, who are very grateful for it.

Is there a teaching in the Lotus Sutra that has particularly moved you?

Yes, it is chapter 20, “The Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect.” I was deeply moved by the practice of the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect, who joined his palms and bowed to everyone he encountered, saying, “You will surely become a buddha,” and devoted himself entirely to revering the buddha nature in all people.

Because people did not understand the meaning of his actions, some became angry and threw stones at him, while others raised sticks against him. Nevertheless, the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect remained steadfast in his conviction, continued his practice of reverence, and ultimately attained perfect awakening. His practice of never looking down on anyone and continuously venerating the buddha nature in all people with the words “You will all become buddhas” is, I believe, the essence of Mahayana Buddhism, embodying patience and compassion.

I also believe that the spirit of the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect teaches us something vitally important for our lives today: to treat family members, friends, colleagues, and subordinates with constant respect; to focus not on their shortcomings, but on their strengths and potential; and, within our communities, to aim for a society that protects peace and human dignity through dialogue that transcends differences of religion and culture. To believe in and respect the buddha nature of all people—this, I believe, is in tune with the Buddha’s heart and the

core of the Lotus Sutra. Taking the Bodhisattva Never Unworthy of Respect as my model, I aspire to become someone who conveys the message “You possess wonderful potential” to those I meet, thereby awakening their buddha nature.

Finally, please tell us about your current practice goals and your dreams for the future.

My foremost goal right now is to continue doing my utmost to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and Rissho Kosei-kai in Andal, where I live. I also hope that those whom I have guided and supported will deepen their study of the teachings, receive the Dharma Teacher qualification and the Gohonzon, and go on to serve as leaders.

Looking further ahead, my great dream is that the teachings will spread more and more and that a Dharma center will eventually be established in Andal as a new base for Dharma dissemination. To make that a reality, I want to continue sharing this powerful message with as many people as possible: “Through the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, which reveal that all people can become buddhas, let us all become happy together.”



Mr. Barua (third from right in the front row) with fellow recipients of the Dharma Teacher qualification after the presentation ceremony held in the Great Sacred Hall on October 26, 2025.

Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now

The Ten Suchnesses



Dr. Dominick Scarangelo
International Advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai



Last time we considered how always “reflecting and correcting”—what many people would call “mindfulness”—is important to practicing the Dharma in daily life.

Have you ever wished for a rule of thumb that clarifies how our mindsets give rise to suffering, helping us identify its roots and align our thoughts and actions with the Dharma, so we can move more easily from suffering to happiness?

Lucky for us, the Lotus Sutra gives us just such a handy guideline. It’s called the Ten Suchnesses. They are a practical teaching showing us how our mindsets and actions create either suffering or happiness. In chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha teaches that everything that exists, whether an object, living being, or situation, has these ten aspects: “such an appearance,” “such a nature,” “such an embodiment,” “such a potential,” “such a function,” “such a cause,” “such a condition,” “such an effect,” “such a reward,” and “from the first to the last, such an ultimate identity.”

The Ten Suchnesses may sound complicated, but they can be understood as ten steps through which things come into being and events occur. Instead of examining all ten at once, let’s start with the first two—“appearance” and “nature.”

“Appearance” refers to how things present themselves to our senses. This includes vision but also other sense faculties such as hearing, touch, and smell. “Nature” is the disposition or character of something. For us living beings, “appearance” is the image we present to the world through our demeanor, facial expressions, and so forth. Also, in the case of us living beings, our “nature” is the disposition of our minds.

Even though we can’t detect something’s nature directly with our senses, the Buddha teaches us that the inside and outside of things correspond, so if we closely observe the appearance of something, we can also know that it has a corresponding inner disposition—“such a nature.” For example, how do we know when someone is angry? We can’t see their minds, can we? But we know the nature of their minds from their

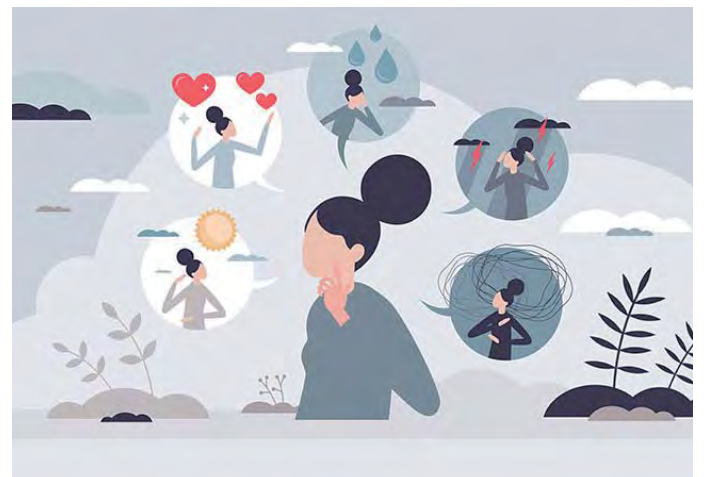
appearance. Their face may look tense, their nostrils flared, and their jaw might be clenched. They may stomp their feet on the ground as they walk, and huff and puff. When our minds are in the realms of hells, appearance gives it away, and even if we try to suppress it, it will eventually surface. We can’t hold it in forever.

Knowing just this much about the Ten Suchnesses can help us in the practice of the Dharma in our daily lives.

Anger doesn’t feel good. But once we become angry, we often stay that way the entire day, or even longer. This is dangerous because anger tends to lead us to act out in ways that will make us suffer even more or hurt other people. If, while reflecting on ourselves, we realize we are angry, we need to correct that as soon as possible. But simply ordering the mind with “Don’t be angry” is often not very effective. What can we do?

Buddhism teaches the “oneness of mind and body.” This means that not only do our minds influence our bodies, but conversely, our bodies also influence our minds. So, if we change our appearance—the image we are manifesting on the outside—that can change the nature of our minds. This may sound counterintuitive, but it’s an important takeaway from the Ten Suchnesses.

This is one reason why Rissho Kosei-kai places



significant importance on having a bright and cheerful demeanor. By making our countenances bright and cheerful, we can also uplift our minds. Founder Niwano explained it this way: Even if we don't feel good at first, as we repeatedly smile, it eventually lightens our mood. On the other hand, if we hold a sad face for a while, we'll naturally begin to feel down. It is said that Founder Niwano, who was known for his magnanimous warmth, practiced smiling. The Ten Suchnesses tell us why; having a bright and cheerful appearance can help us have such a bright and cheerful mind.

If you notice tension in your face, clenched fists, or a sense that people are keeping their distance, these may be signs that anger is present in your mind—even if you aren't aware of it. To change your mind, try changing the appearance you present to the world. Offer the world a smile! This one simple act can help transform your state of mind.

And as you change your “such an appearance,” not only will you begin to brighten your own mind, but you will also begin to have a positive influence on the people around you and the situation in which you find yourself. More on this next time.

Field Report from the Sangha

Rev. Kevin Roche
Minister, San Antonio Dharma Center



Appearance and Nature

Earlier this year, a wonderful member of our Sangha sat with me to discuss the emotional struggles she was contending with. This member is a healthy, spiritually mature, and compassionate individual. As we talked, I could see that she was deeply distressed, nervous, and exhausted. Events in her life had taken a disturbing turn that she could not have anticipated, and she was attempting to navigate a very challenging path from despair to understanding.

From within her capsule of suffering, she was expressing a sense of anger, disappointment, and frustration. But her demeanor remained calm, thoughtful, and composed. One could easily see that she was determined to find Truth and wisdom within her experience. I seemed to be watching water sloshing in a pond during a storm—the turbulence was shallow and temporary, awaiting the eventual calm stillness that is the pond's nature.

What precipitated the return to peacefulness was an extraordinary decision she made: to turn this experience into a Dharma Journey. Over the next six months, through compassionate practice and listening to the wisdom of her Dharma Teachers, she was able

to access the insight that was evident in her authentic self, her true buddha nature. Month after month, she reconstructed her experience, reflecting on her role in the events of her life, recontextualizing the sufferings so they could become Dharma lessons, and seeking healthy ways of correcting and improving her unskillful behaviors.

As time progressed, she realized she was immersed in an advanced study of awareness and acceptance, allowing the Dharma to guide her toward eventually using her challenging experience as a guide for others.

I felt honored and privileged to have observed the methodical evolution of an awakening Bodhisattva. This new person was someone we had all sensed was possible.

My experience became one of being an alert spectator in the spiritual development of a burgeoning practitioner. But it was also the experience of learning how to see the buddha nature in all people so that we can activate the condition that provides a field of cultivation when the cause arises.



Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

Find Joy in Nurturing People

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



Nurture People by “Covering Them in Your Feathers”

The original meaning of the Japanese word “to nurture” seems to have been “to cover in feathers.” A parent bird uses its body feathers to cover its eggs and keep them warm, and once they hatch, the bird nurtures the chicks while protecting them from predators by concealing them beneath its wings. Because of this, the act of raising something with great care came to be expressed through the word that means “to cover in feathers.”

When my grandfather used to tuck me inside the padded cotton jacket he was wearing, covering me up completely and repeatedly telling me, “Grow up to be a person who does good for the sake of others,” he was acting just like the parent bird—nurturing me by covering me in his feathers. Had I been taught the same thing while being made to sit properly on the tatami mat and spoken to in a stern tone, it would never have sunk into my heart the way it did. This is the difference between simply rearing someone and truly nurturing them.

Another important point about teaching and nurturing people is that it is best to take the initiative and demonstrate the correct way to do something yourself, like my father did. When you do that, those you are teaching come to discover the joy of learning by following another’s good example.

What We Share Within Our Differences

Rev. Takashi Maeda
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International



Rev. Takashi Maeda delivers a speech at the inauguration ceremony for the minister of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center on December 20, 2025.

Hello, everyone. At the end of last year, I visited the Dharma centers in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and had the opportunity to attend the inauguration ceremonies for the new ministers. Although both countries are in South Asia, I felt significant differences not only in language but also in clothing, food, and daily customs. However, what they had in common was the presence of members who warmly embraced us visitors with kindness and compassion.

During my stay, in the quiet hours before dawn, I could hear the wind and the birds singing. When I closed my eyes, I was wrapped in a mysterious feeling, as if I could no longer tell where I was. Although the scenery before my eyes was different, by closing my eyes and letting myself become one with nature, I felt deeply that we are all living on the same earth. At that moment, the faces of the members I had met there overlapped in my mind with the image of the bodhisattvas who sprang up out of the earth as described in the Lotus Sutra, just like the other members active all around the world.

In this month's message, through Kenji Miyazawa's poem "Undefeated by the Rain," President Niwano explains to us about the way of life of the bodhisattvas springing up out of the earth: we stay close to others with compassion while reflecting on what we can do.

By putting the Buddha's teachings into practice, we can become a source of support for many people's hearts. Each of us is different in appearance, personality, and interests, but it is precisely because of these differences that we are able to help so many different kinds of people.

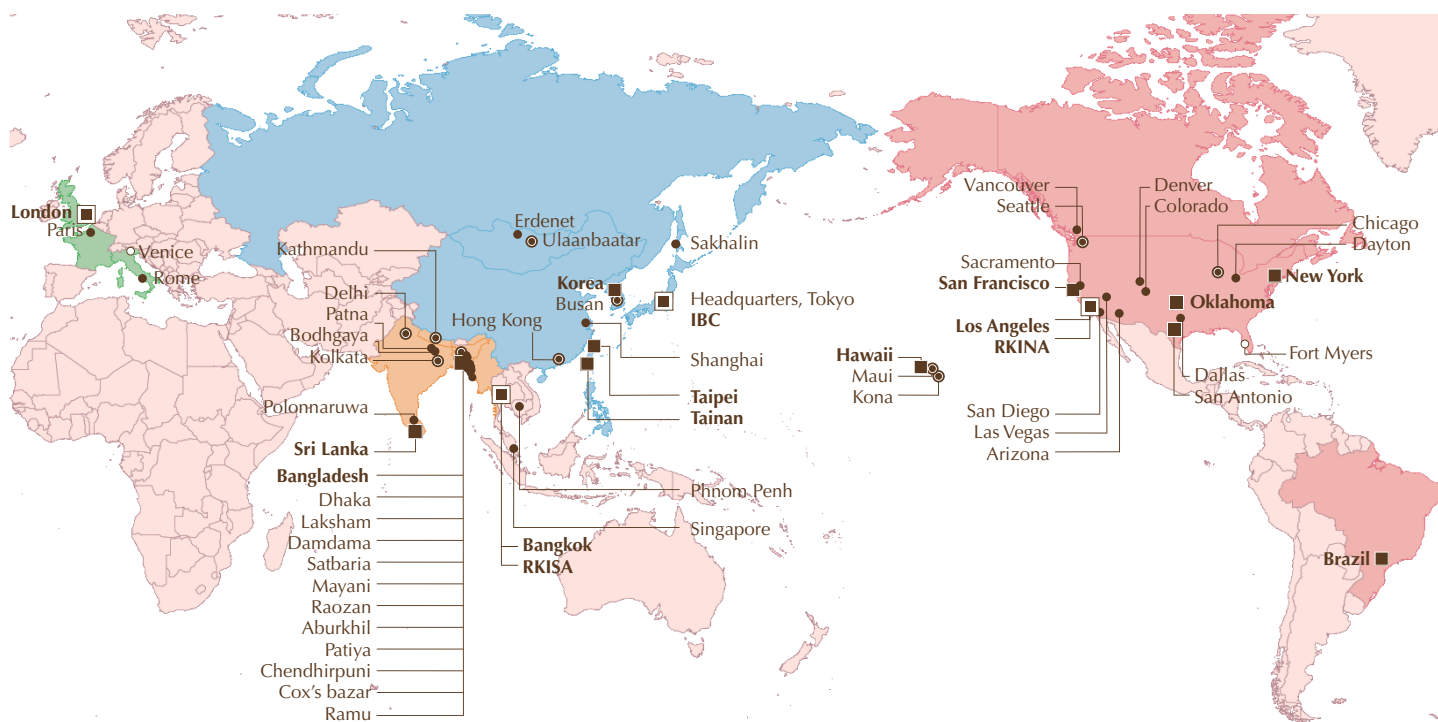
Believing that our seemingly insignificant daily practices will lead to world peace, let us continue to strive brightly and energetically this month, each utilizing our unique strengths.



Rev. Maeda (front row, center) with participants in the inauguration ceremony for the minister of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center.



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