

Living the Lotus 3

Buddhism in Everyday Life

2026
VOL. 246



Thailand



Cambodia



Japan



South Africa

Thai and Cambodian Youth Pray for Peace amid Border Conflict on February 8, Joined by the Global Sangha of Rissho Kosei-kai

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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.

Reflecting on the Meaning of Oneness

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



The View of Humanity and the World in the Lotus Sutra

The scripture that we Rissho Kosei-kai members rely upon and place our faith in is, needless to say, The Threefold Lotus Sutra (The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma, and The Sutra of the Method for Contemplating the Bodhisattva Universal Sage). In particular, we value the truths about humanity and the world that are revealed in The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma (the Lotus Sutra).

The Lotus Sutra's view of humanity is that people start with the mind of compassion, then aspire and take action to increase the happiness and reduce the suffering of the people around them—in other words, human beings become bodhisattvas. Next, the worldview of the Lotus Sutra is the teaching that if all people realize they are bodhisattvas, and each person awakens to and manifests their inherent buddha nature, then this saha world—the real world of human beings—will instantly be transformed into a land of tranquil light.

Furthermore, I believe the Lotus Sutra teaches us that nothing will be resolved—from the large global problems we hear about these days to smaller issues closer to home—unless we stop expecting something or someone else to solve these problems for us and each and every one of us pursues, without straying, the way of humanity, just as if we are [bodhisattvas] springing up out of the earth.

This might seem like a rather simplistic interpretation, but the Lotus Sutra conveys the message that it is precisely anonymous, ordinary individuals like us who have the ability and responsibility to solve the problems of life and the world, thereby encouraging us to awaken to the fact that we are bodhisattvas. This message is supported by core principles of the Lotus Sutra: “All life is part of and sustained by one great life” and “everything is one.”

The Universe Is One, the World Is One

“There was only one goal for me when I founded Rissho Kosei-kai, and that was to liberate people from suffering.” These words were spoken by Founder Nikkyo Niwano. This month’s message may sound like another Lotus Sutra interpretation because the Lotus Sutra forms the basis for reflecting on the founding spirit of this organization and reinforces the important concept that “everything is one,” which is the dynamic force for liberating people.

“Everything is one.” This idea is, of course, based on the One Vehicle teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Leaving out the complicated details, this simply means that “the universe is one, the Earth is one, and the world is one.”

The Earth was born in a universe that continues to evolve as one entity, like a single life form, and everything existing on this Earth exists in a mutual state of interdependence. That is, everything sustains and is sustained by everything else. This fact means that the entire universe can be considered one great life and shows us that each and every one of our individual lives is united as one. It is also the case, in the world of religion, that many different faiths have in common the principle of the oneness of all things and teachings about the mind of compassion and love. And above all, different faiths are one in their feelings of respect and reverence for God and the Buddha. Therefore, if all people—not just people of faith—stop dwelling on minor differences, turn their eyes toward what they have in common, and recognize that they are really “one,” a deeper sense of compassion and tolerance will emerge in their minds and that, in turn, will enlarge the world of liberation that brings with it peace and hope for life. That said, human beings are unable to do this.

Regarding this matter, Founder Niwano advised, “Other people have their own individuality, their own position, and their own circumstances. When you understand that, a generous feeling to accept and embrace those people naturally arises within you.” Around the same time, at the Third World Assembly of Religions for Peace (1979), he issued a warning that seemed to foresee the current state of the world and the planet: “We must rise above narrow-minded nationalism. We must achieve a broader regionalism, and eventually an all-embracing globalism.” Even now, nearly half a century after the Third World Assembly, I feel a deep sense of regret that the founding spirit of our organization—the goal of “liberating people”—has not been fully realized, and I think that we should again reflect on our mission to build together a world in which everyone supports one another and we are all united as one.

From *Kosei*, March 2026



I Cannot Help but Share This Dharma with Those Who Are Seeking Liberation Right Now

Mr. Marcus Staff, Rissho Kosei-kai of the UK

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

I first encountered the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai in 2001. Since my teens, I had been interested in religion and the spiritual world beyond the material world. I eventually developed a strong interest in Buddhism and studied it through various books. Among the Buddhist texts I came across was a book titled *Fire in the Lotus*, which discussed the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Buddhism. The book raised my interest in the Lotus Sutra, and its content resonated deeply with my heart at that time—it felt somehow fitting in my heart. Within its pages introducing Buddhist organizations, I found a brief overview of Rissho Kosei-kai.

After that, I contacted Rev. Megumi Hirota (now Rev. Megumi Wada, Director of General Affairs at headquarters), who was the representative of Rissho Kosei-kai of the UK in Oxford at the time. I met directly with Rev. Hirota, who taught me about Rissho Kosei-kai's teachings and practices. Gradually, I began participating in memorial services and Dharma circles, and I started practicing as a member of the UK sangha. Until the London Center opened in 2020 and Rev. Kyoichiro Hosoya was assigned there as director, I was primarily engaged in dissemination activities with sangha members in Cardiff, South Wales, where I live, which is about 250 kilometers from London.

Please tell us about any experiences or events that served as turning points or had a significant influence on your faith activities.

Attending the third World Sangha Assembly in 2006 was a major turning point in my life. At the time, I



Mr. Marcus Staff

was suffering from depression, which led to some painful days. When I heard a member of the Los Angeles Dharma Center deliver her Dharma Journey talk in the Great Sacred Hall, it deeply moved me and gave me tremendous courage. Despite enduring the hardship of multiple brain-tumor surgeries, she had cultivated inner strength through faith, maintained a positive outlook on life despite serious illness, and expressed heartfelt gratitude. While hearing her talk, I shifted my mindset. Rather than focusing on eliminating my suffering from depression, I accepted the illness as part of my life and resolved to “live with my illness” from then on.

Simultaneously, I became able to feel gratitude for the life I am given each day. I also wondered, “By

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sharing the Lotus Sutra, the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai, and my own experiences with depression and anxiety, might I be able to be of some help to others?" Furthermore, through the teaching of the impermanence of all things, I came to understand that neither good nor bad lasts forever. Precisely because everything is constantly changing, I resolved to value living wholeheartedly in the here and now, to face what is before me with sincerity, and to act accordingly.

We understand you are now active as a leader in Dharma dissemination in Wales. What mindset do you bring to your dissemination efforts?

I engage in Dharma dissemination driven by the feeling that I simply cannot help but share this wonderful Dharma with those who are seeking liberation and need it right now. I believe the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai are universal truths that are applicable to anyone, anytime. They can be applied in daily life as practical Buddhism. I believe this is the main



Mr. Staff with fellow members from South Wales in front of his home altar.



Mr. Staff leads sutra recitation at a member's house in the West Midlands.

characteristic and appeal of Rissho Kosei-kai. With this conviction in mind, I wish to share these teachings of the Lotus Sutra with as many people as possible, so they too will be liberated and find happiness—just as I was. To achieve this, the support of the sangha is essential, and I sincerely hope to expand this circle.

Last October, you received the Dharma Teacher qualification at the Great Sacred Hall. Could you share your current feelings?

Receiving the qualification is a tremendous honor. For me, as a member of Rissho Kosei-kai who has practiced for many years, it marks a significant milestone and the beginning of a new phase of practice. Moving forward, I intend to devote myself fully to dissemination activities primarily in two regions: South Wales, where I live, and the West Midlands in England. Specifically, I would like to enhance members' connection with the Dharma and regularly gather to engage in Rissho Kosei-kai's basic practices, such as sutra recitation and Dharma circle, at my home or at members' homes in each region.

What aspects of Rissho Kosei-kai appeal to you?

Earlier, I mentioned that Rissho Kosei-kai's teachings are universal and applied as practical Buddhism. Beyond that, I believe Dharma circle is a

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major attraction. It is a place where we share life's joys, sorrows, and sufferings together in the sangha, mutually encouraging and inspiring one another as we walk the path based on the Buddha's teachings—that is what I believe the practice of Dharma circle to be. Furthermore, having received the Dharma Teacher qualification, I expect to have more opportunities to serve as Dharma circle facilitator. At such times, I believe it is paramount to engage with members by consciously listening to them with attention and empathy. By listening with compassion, I hope to create interactions where participants' hearts naturally open, their burdens lighten, and they can speak of their suffering with peace of mind.

Finally, could you share your practice goals?

Personally, I wish to continue diligent daily practices, such as morning and evening sutra recitation, guiding others, participating in and leading Dharma circle and other activities, while growing as a believer. Furthermore, it is a significant goal as a leader to support all members of the sangha with all my heart. As the first British Dharma Teacher in Wales, I hope that many more Dharma Teachers will emerge from the UK sangha in the future. With this wish in mind, I will strive diligently alongside other members to nurture many new leaders, based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.



Mr. Staff (second row, second from right) with members of the London Center after the ceremony celebrating the twenty-eighth anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai of the UK on November 23, 2024.

Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now

The Ten Suchnesses: Embodiment, Potential, and Function



Dr. Dominick Scarangelo
International Advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai



Last time we began exploring the Lotus Sutra’s principle of the Ten Suchnesses—ten steps through which all things come into being and events occur. Knowing the Ten Suchnesses is important to practicing the Dharma in everyday life because they help us understand, and thus become aware of in real time, how our mindsets and actions create either suffering or happiness. Last time we explored the first two, “such an appearance” and “such a nature,” and considered how changing our demeanor, facial expressions, and so forth—how we present ourselves to the world—can transform our mindsets. In the West, we usually think of our outer expression as a manifestation of our inner state, but Buddhism tells us the reverse is also true: our mindsets can be functions of our outer expressions. This is why Buddhism stresses proper decorum and right action, and why Rissho Kosei-kai emphasizes the importance of trying to maintain a bright and cheerful demeanor.

This time, let’s consider “such an embodiment,” “such a potential,” and “such a function.” “Embodiment” is the sum of our being. It is the totality of our inner state, which is our mindset, or “such a nature,” and our outward manifestation of our being, “such an appearance.” A simple way to think about it is “appearance + nature = embodiment.”

The Buddha taught that everything that is embodied in our world possesses two qualities: potential and function. Potential is exactly that: latent abilities and possibilities. Function is the manifestation of those potentials in the world through action.

Let’s stick with the example of the realm of hells—a personal world of anger. An angry mindset and appearance causes us to have the potential, the likelihood, for striking out at others in word or deed, inflicting physical or emotional harm on them. We are

primed and energized for this, like a wound-up toy, compressed spring, or a loaded and cocked firearm.

“Such a function” happens when we encounter circumstances that provide an opportunity for that pent-up negative energy to be released. That’s when potential energy becomes kinetic energy.

This is why it’s important to be self-aware about our mindsets and how we comport ourselves, because they foretell how we are predisposed to act. If we can intervene at the stage of “such an appearance” or “such a nature,” we can prevent ourselves from embodying the negative energy of anger and stop the manifestation of angry action toward others before it even happens.

On the other hand, if we can develop the mindsets of the realms of awakening, and comport ourselves accordingly, we’ll build up the potential for wise, skillful action that brings us liberation from suffering and that will bring more light to the world around us.



If we catch ourselves glaring or snapping at someone, we should reflect on our feelings and state of mind. It's important to recognize that the other person is never the cause of our outburst of frustration. This is what the Ten Suchnesses teach us. Other people are not the causes of our own behavior; we are. The other person is only the condition, a convenient circumstance for us to manifest what is already within us.

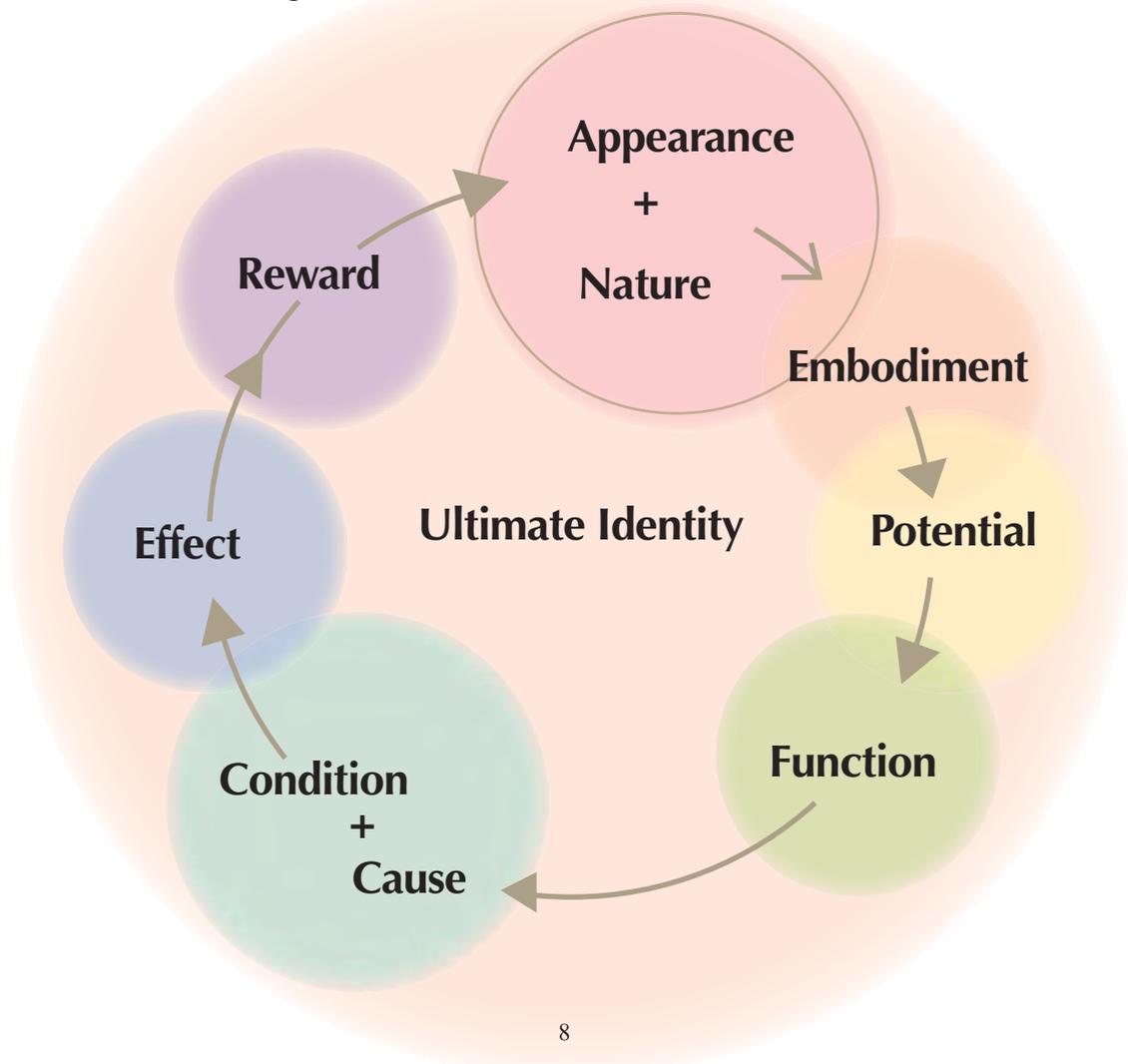
You can see this by observing how one person stays calm and another person explodes, even in similar situations. Take, for example, how people respond differently to being inconvenienced by having to wait in a long line at a store or government office. Some people stay calm, while others lose their cool. They face the same circumstances but respond differently. The difference is in the mindsets of the individuals. The situation doesn't make them angry. The source of the anger is within the individual.

So in that moment when we catch ourselves snapping at those around us, raising our voices, or

responding with a huff, it's not about that other person. It's about us. Nobody "makes" us angry. If we are angry, it's because we already have that potential within us. When we think "So-and-so made me angry," we are reversing cause and condition. Others are the condition, the setting or opportunity. We are the cause. When we accept this and take responsibility for our actions, we can look inward and begin dealing with what is going on within ourselves. Reversing the cause and condition is scapegoating, and as long as we do this, we'll never do the self-work needed to attain liberation and be happy.

Instead of blaming others, we need to ask what is going on within us and why. How are we suffering inside, and what can we do—how can we practice—to move toward the extinguishment of this suffering?

You may have noticed that we've entered the sphere of "such a cause," "such a condition," and "such an effect." Let's consider them in greater detail next month.





Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now



Field Report from the Sangha Hoza, Tedori, and a Healing Sense of Community

Rev. Chris Peters

Minister, Rissho Kosei-kai of Oklahoma (RKOK)

For most of 2024, we had a visitor with us at RKOK who was in his early thirties. He was kind, polite, soft-spoken, and seemed to mostly listen, although he did occasionally speak during Sunday morning *hoza*, or “Dharma circle.”

As he spent more time with the sangha, he shared with us that while he had been living far from his hometown and in another state for graduate school, he experienced a cancer diagnosis and treatment. He continued by saying he had been in remission for a while. It was good to know he was in remission and did not require further treatment, but he appeared to have an emotional heaviness to him, a tension I had yet to understand.

In early January of 2025, he signed up for membership and followed this with more frequent attendance at Sunday morning services, classes, and meditation. He began to be more open with me and the sangha, participating in *tedori*, or “helping members enhance their connection with the Dharma.” At the same time, he was also present when other sangha members shared about losses they experienced throughout the year, and he witnessed how we hold space for each other, not giving direct advice but listening with an open heart.

He shared with me the difficulty of being a graduate student in his twenties who was facing a potentially terminal illness so early in life. The challenges ran deep too, due to the difficulties of navigating the administrative aspects of our health care system here in the United States; this part was especially frustrating for him. In addition, the physical and emotional aspects of the cancer treatment and seriousness of the illness had left him with a sense of isolation from others.

As he shared further in *tedori* and listened in *hoza*, I saw the emotional heaviness and tension he had carried in the first year here at RKOK slowly evaporate. I believe that while this has been a healing journey for him, it has been a great learning experience for me too in the healing power available to members through the combination of *hoza* and *tedori*. In *hoza*, holding space is modeled for everyone participating; there’s a sense of trust, safety, and a realization that transcendence of suffering is possible for people even when circumstances cannot be changed and must instead be accepted. I think this *hoza* experience I’m describing acts as a glue to create a sense of community within the sangha, and this in turn also encourages members to trust the process of *tedori*.

Impermanence is continually a factor in life; people are dealing with all the challenges that unfold between birth and death. Illness is an obvious example, family members passing away is another, employment can be stressful or unstable, and there is always something available on the news about world events that can trigger upset. Yet, every Sunday morning, regardless of what is happening, the sangha is there and available to mindfully listen; it’s a consistent and safe social space. For some people, sangha might be the only social environment they can go to that is consistent and safe.

I see how the consistency of the sense of community offered by the sangha compels people, with the encouragement of another member in *tedori*, to go deeper within themselves and their circumstances. As you experience this while listening as a *hoza* participant, acting as a *hoza* facilitator, or during *tedori*, the buddha nature of the speaker becomes evident. With our new member I just described, or anyone else who fully engages, I see clearly the fundamental need humans have to be listened to without judgement and to have acceptance modeled in a heart-to-heart exchange about a difficult topic. When this is provided and buddha nature is connected to and expressed, people find ways to move forward beyond survival and thrive again.

The member I’ve described here has, after a brief delay, recently completed his PhD and started a new job. He is much more at ease than when we first met him. His moving forward in life was accomplished through his efforts and the support he received by taking refuge in the Three Treasures.



Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

Find Joy in Nurturing People

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



See People Through Eyes of Compassion

Raised in this way, I came to devote my life to guiding others to faith in the Lotus Sutra and nurturing them. I guided first one person and then another, and before I knew it, this effort had grown into today's Rissho Kosei-kai. Guiding and nurturing people has never felt like a hardship to me; rather, it is a joy beyond words. I can think of no other work in the world that allows one to enjoy such happiness.

From my experience, what is most important for nurturing people is discovering what they are good at. Everyone possesses the inherent wish of their buddha nature to improve themselves and be of service to others. Therefore, we should attend to the expression of their nature with a compassionate gaze. That is what it means to nurture someone. This compassionate way of relating to others is how my grandfather and father interacted with me.

On the other hand, there is the view that since all people have faults and bad habits, a person cannot grow into a mature adult unless these are properly corrected. However, when criticized, everyone's spirits sink, and we end up discouraged. So rather than focusing only on people's shortcomings, you should discover their strengths, thinking, "There must be a side of this person from which buddha nature can easily manifest."

This is like the passage in the Lotus Sutra where Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World looks upon living beings with eyes of compassion and bestows upon them a vast and



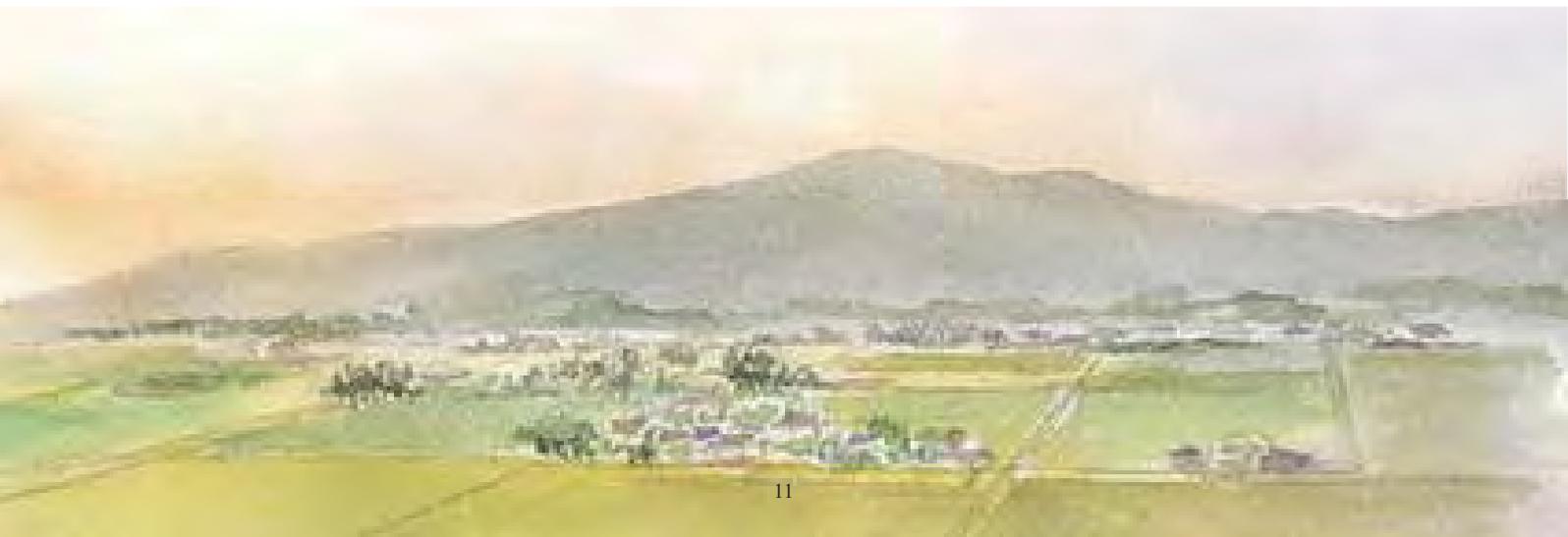
immeasurable ocean of blessings. When we look at others with eyes of compassion, the result is a sense of abundant happiness—“an ocean of blessings, vast and immeasurable” (chapter 25, “Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World as Universal Gateway”).

In the reality of modern society, we surely face many difficulties. But, likening everyday life and practice at Rissho Kosei-kai to sumo wrestling, members say, “If life at work and at home is the main tournament, then Dharma circles at Rissho Kosei-kai serve as the training ground.”

Rissho Kosei-kai is a training ground because Dharma center leaders give careful, detailed guidance like a coach, telling you, “Try it this way,” or “Try it that way,” to help you avoid repeating mistakes in everyday life. And at times, they even teach concrete, practical approaches to life in a step-by-step manner, just as my father once showed us how to cut grass by example. That’s why Dharma circle sessions, fulfilling the role of a parent-bird’s feathers, are places where people nurture one another.

There is no work as joyful as nurturing people and guiding them. That’s because it is bodhisattva practice carried out through the expression of your buddha nature. And as you continue to nurture others in this way, you naturally improve yourself and gain self-confidence. And the more people you guide and help grow, the more the work of nurturing others becomes a joy, and the more one is naturally enriched with greater virtue.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 93–94



Returning to the Principle of “Everything Is One”

Rev. Takashi Maeda
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. Eighty-eight years ago on March 5, 1938, Rissho Kosei-kai was founded. The Founder has since spoken of the spirit in which the organization was founded, saying, “There was only one goal for me when I founded Rissho Kosei-kai, and that was to liberate people from suffering.” The driving force behind this spirit was the One Vehicle teaching of the Lotus Sutra, expressed in the phrase “everything is one.”

However, we tend to divide what was originally, and is still, one, such as mind and body, self and others, humanity and nature, and faith and daily life.

The Lotus Sutra teaches us that “this place is indeed the place of the way,” which means that the very place where we are now is the place of practice, or in other words, faith is life itself. For example, when the mind is troubled, the physical body may quietly signal that imbalance. By noticing such signals—whether from within us or as a call from the Buddha or the divine—we may be able to bring the teachings to life in our everyday lives. The teachings are not confined to books; they come alive and work within our daily doubts and struggles. Moreover, although we may seem to live alone, our lives are sustained not only by our own strength but through our connections with others and with nature.

As we celebrate Rissho Kosei-kai’s eighty-eighth anniversary this month, let us return once more to the fundamental principle of “everything is one” and take a renewed step toward living the teachings in our daily lives. The mission entrusted to each of us may well be to embody the aspirations of those who came before us with gratitude for the path they paved.



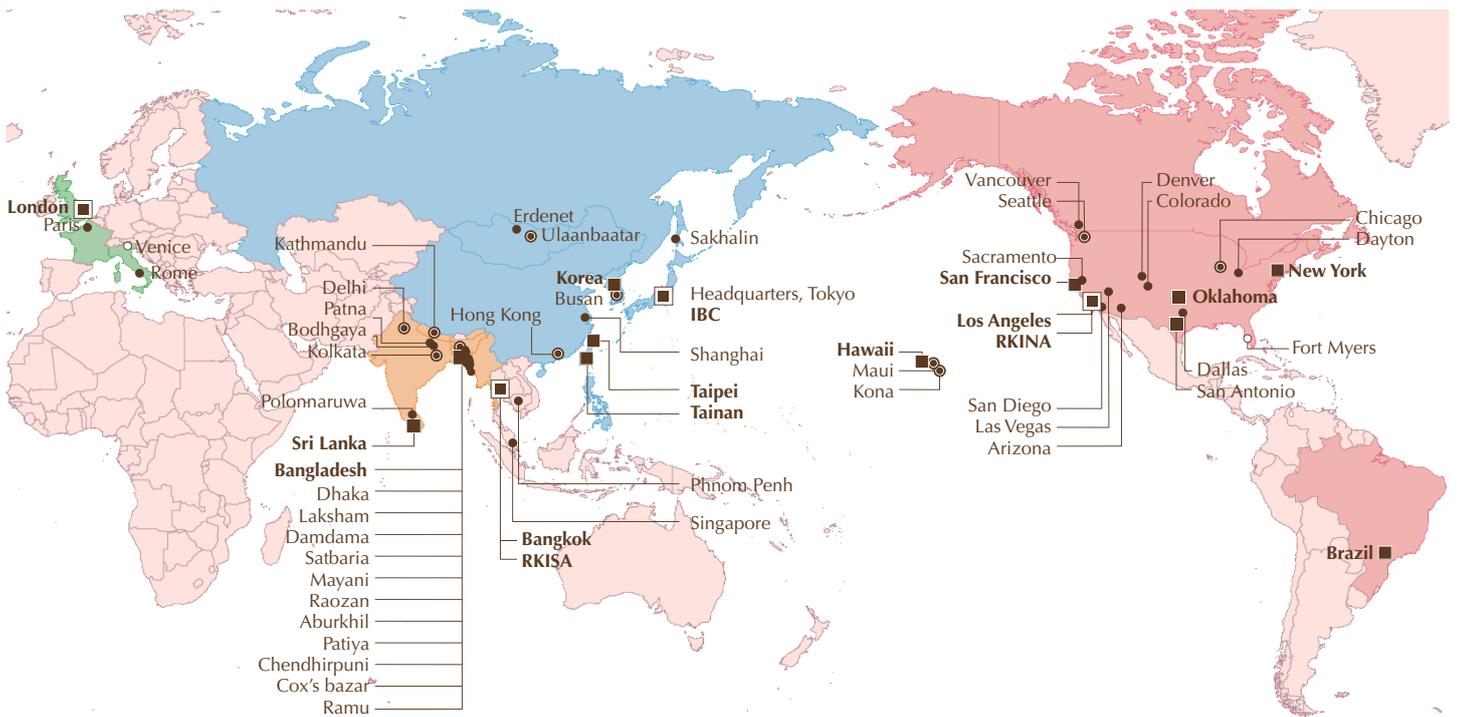
Rev. Maeda with second-year overseas students at Gakurin after his lecture at the Ome Campus on February 9.

Rissho Kosei-kai International

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