

Living the Lotus 6

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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Rissho Kosei-kai of Los Angeles

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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.

Suffering Is Also Your Life's Companion

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



We Make Our Own Suffering

From time to time, I have asked all of you, “When a glass is half full of water, how do you view it? How do you perceive it?” The author Seikan Kobayashi says that there are three ways you can view it. First, with displeasure and dissatisfaction that it is only half full. Second, with joy, feeling glad that it is half full. And third, with gratitude, being thankful for the kindness of whoever left half for you. However you view or interpret a situation like this, you yourself are the one who is assigning it some sort of meaning, and the only fact is that the glass is half full of water. Whether you accept this fact with displeasure and dissatisfaction, or with joy, or with gratitude, stems entirely from your own mind—from you.

I think that for us as lay practitioners, it is essential that the Buddha’s teachings are put in easily understood terms that are readily applicable to our daily lives. In this regard, Mr. Kobayashi’s writings—grounded in the teaching expounded in the Heart of Wisdom Sutra that “all forms are, namely, emptiness”—show us that whether things are pleasant or unpleasant, we ourselves arbitrarily assign meaning to all phenomena, which causes vacillations between our emotional highs of elation and lows of despair. In particular, the phenomena we think of as the root causes of our suffering and anxiety are oftentimes the seeds of suffering that we ourselves have sown, through our arbitrary decisions, prejudices, preconceived notions, desires, doubts, attachments, and so on. One example of the Buddhist way of seeing things, grounded in everyday life, is this glass-of-water analogy, which shows you that by changing how you view and interpret things, you can live with much greater ease.

Suffering Also Provides Some of Life's Meaningful Moments

“Birth, aging, illness, and death are called ‘the four sufferings,’ but for me, they are not the four sufferings, they are the four joys.” These are the words of Dr. Ko Hirasawa (former president of Kyoto University). He suggests that by changing your perspective, your life will be a continuous succession of joy and ease (*Ikiyo kyo mo yorokonde* [Let’s live every day joyfully], Chichi Publishing, 1995). Although illness is generally seen as a source of suffering, the poet Shinmin Sakamura wrote this poem, imbued with a rather gentle sense of gratitude: “Illness / Has opened up / Another world for me— / The peaches / Are blooming” (*Sakamura Shinmin zen shishu* [Collected poems by Shinmin Sakamura], Daito Publishing, 1985). The novelist Kojin Shimomura wrote: “The world I want to inhabit is one in which suffering is not the cause for despair, but rather the stimulus for courage” (*Seinen no shisaku no tameni* [For the wonder of youth], PHP, 2016). The aforementioned Kobayashi says of the teaching of emptiness that he illustrated with his glass-of-water analogy: “Perhaps what the Buddha wishes to tell you is that when you can find joy and pleasure in the same phenomenon, you are spiritually refining yourself” (*Uchu ga mikata no mikatado* [A perspective that makes the universe your ally], Koensha, 2003). Indeed, even those phenomena we think of as painful can be viewed and interpreted in various ways that ultimately lead us to find the courage to live and to find a new way of life. If you only view something as one-dimensional—seeing it solely as full of suffering or pain—you are more likely to become perpetually obsessed with that “suffering” and lose an excellent opportunity to grow and mature.

That said, I am not suggesting that you should force yourself to cheerfully accept painful phenomena. Rather, try to view things from multiple perspectives, and then recognize that any kind of suffering, when seen in the light of the truth of impermanence and the teaching of dependent origination, is itself an integral part of the unfolding circumstances and inevitabilities of life. Moreover, such experiences are linked to a creative future, just like those of a young child growing into an adult. Even if it takes some time, we possess the power to transform our suffering into provisions for life and joy.

Suffering and sorrow form meaningful moments in your life—they are also your precious life experiences. To quote the words of theoretical physicist Haruo Saji, “Since the present moment is formed by the accumulation of the past, by looking ahead to the distant future and carefully designing our actions from this moment forward, we have the ability to change both the future and the past” (*Chichi* [Attaining wisdom], Chichi Publishing, October 2021). In a similar sense, it is essential—for the sake of our future selves, the adults of tomorrow, and the future of our planet—that we live fully in the present moment by accepting as our life companions the suffering as well as the joy we have accumulated in the past.

From *Kosei*, June 2026



Spiritual Journey

Step by Step Along the Right Path Until My Last Breath

Ms. Swarna Padmini Delgoda
Sri Lanka Dharma Center

This Dharma Journey was presented in the Great Sacred Hall on March 15, 2026, during the ceremony commemorating Shakyamuni Buddha's Memorial Day (Upasatha Day).

Good morning. Everyone, please guide me.

My name is Swarna Padmini Delgoda. I come from the island nation of Sri Lanka, known as the Pearl of the Indian Ocean. I have the privilege of serving as the general manager of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center and the chairperson of the Rissho Kosei Dhamma Foundation. I see myself as a humble instrument of the Buddha, dedicating my life to his service. In fact, standing before you today feels like a miracle arranged by the Buddha himself!

First allow me to give you some insight into my early life. I was born as the fifth child in a large and happy family with six children. I have three sisters and two brothers. When I was only six years old, tragedy struck. Our father, the pillar of our home, passed away from typhoid fever. His death pushed me into deep sadness and fear, and for a long time it felt as if my whole world had collapsed. That early loss left a deep mark on my heart and shaped the way I grew up.

When my older siblings had almost finished their schooling, my mother decided to send me to a Catholic boarding convent, as I was unable to travel to and from school on my own. I enjoyed my boarding school life so much that I did not even want to go home during school holidays. My mother, worried that I might change my religion, then moved me from the Catholic convent to a Buddhist school. This sudden change had a profound impact on what would otherwise have been a very different career path. However, supported by teachers and friends, I found



Ms. Delgoda delivers a Dharma Journey talk at the Great Sacred Hall.

joy in baking cakes and sweets during the holidays. I would constantly wonder, “How can I make this taste even better?” or “How can I make the person eating this smile?” This childhood passion—my desire to make someone happy—became the driving force that opened doors in my future.

At the age of twenty-five, I was fortunate to secure a job at a well-known biscuit company, Maliban Biscuit Manufactories. Little did I know at the time this would be a life-changing opportunity. I started as a supervisor and worked very hard, driven by my curiosity. In time, I was given many opportunities to visit biscuit factories abroad to learn new technologies, and I spent many days developing new products. In recognition of my hard work, I was promoted to factory manager, a rare achievement for a woman at that time.

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During this period, I also met my wonderful husband. In our entire life together, we never had a heated argument or exchanged harsh words. Our careers were fulfilling, we were blessed with a beloved son, and we built a happy family.

However, in 1989, Sri Lanka experienced violent political conflict between government forces and anti-government groups. Gunshots and explosions filled the streets. We lived in what was called The Age of Fear, and life could be lost at any moment. At work, because of my position as a manager, I began to feel targeted. Realizing I could not protect my son's future, I made the painful decision to resign from the job I loved.

Although it was difficult to leave my husband and son behind, I traveled to Melbourne, Australia, for safety at the suggestion of family friends. Thanks to my English skills and work experience, I soon found a job in Melbourne and before long, I was able to bring my son to Australia and enroll him in a private school. As life became stable again, a question grew in my heart: *What can I do to ensure we live in peace from now on?*

In 1993, when the situation in Sri Lanka improved, I decided to return. I left my son, then a university student, in Australia and reunited with my husband. Together, we opened a shop stocked with a wide variety of party supplies and planned events for birthdays and weddings. Since such shops were rare in Sri Lanka back then, the business took off in no time.

One regular customer to the shop was Mr. Gamini Chandrasekara, who was the leader of what was then the liaison office of Rissho Kosei-kai of Sri Lanka. He often invited me to visit his home, which served as the liaison office, to see their activities. After many requests, I finally agreed, and one day I took a friend with me to visit his home. There, I saw something I



Ms. Delgoda leads sutra recitation at the Sri Lanka Dharma Center.

will never forget for the rest of my life. It was a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha standing upright.

In Sri Lanka, the heartland of Theravada Buddhism, we usually see the Buddha seated in meditation. But this Buddha was standing and appeared to be about to take a step forward to save us. The realization that there is a Buddha who does not just sit and wait, but comes to meet us, filled my heart with warmth and joy.

Driven by my own curiosity, I began to study the life and teachings of Founder Nikkyo Niwano through his books published in English. There, I found the answer to the question I had been asking myself for a long time: *What can I do for peace?* Then in 1998, I formally joined Rissho Kosei-kai, convinced that this was the Truth I had been seeking.

The more I learned, the more hope grew inside me. I developed a strong desire to be like the Founder, to make people happy, and to offer my life to the Buddha. I decided to close my thriving business and dedicate my time to dissemination work. People around me tried to dissuade me, saying it was a waste, but I had no hesitation. I felt that enriching people's hearts by sharing the teachings was far more valuable than making money through business. From then on,

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I set a rule for myself to completely eliminate negative phrases such as “I can’t,” “It’s impossible,” and “I don’t know how” from my mouth and my mind.

In 2010, the Sri Lanka Dharma Center was officially established, and the first minister, Rev. Yoshihisa Yamamoto, appointed me as general manager. He used to tell me from time to time, “Mrs. Delgoda, the precious life of the Buddha lives within each and every one of us.” These words changed my entire perspective. I realized that just as my life is precious, the life of every person in front of me is equally sacred.

However, the path of dissemination was not easy. In Sri Lanka, a country with a strong Theravada following, we faced criticism from temples and local residents for spreading the Mahayana teachings of Kosei-kai. A particularly significant obstacle we faced was the difficulty of obtaining corporate registration. Since we had not received official recognition as a religious organization from the Sri Lankan government, we found it difficult to even obtain a long-term visa for the minister to stay in Sri Lanka.

During this time, I decided to practice greeting the Buddha within every person, not only by using words but through my actions. I continued to join my hands in prayer toward officials who opposed us and neighbors who criticized us. Perhaps that prayer was heard. A path opened for us to register as a nongovernmental organization (NGO), and our legal status was finally granted. I deeply believe this was not achieved through human power, but through the power of the Buddha within each one of us calling out and being heard.

Since 2015, our mission has centered on home-based *hoza*, also known as “circles of compassion.” These are small gatherings held in members’ homes, where people come together to share their

joys, worries, and life experiences. The warmth of these meetings has inspired many across Sri Lanka to step forward and say they want to be *hoza* leaders too. Today, about eighty dedicated leaders are guiding these circles, helping the spirit of compassion spread from home to home and heart to heart.

As one of the home-based *hoza* leaders, I too host *hoza* monthly, on the twenty-fourth, which is the day I had the Buddha statue installed in my home altar. The wonderful thing about home-based *hoza* is that because it takes place in a relaxed atmosphere, people can easily open up about the worries deep inside their hearts.

One day, while listening to others, I had a sudden realization. It was a moment of self-reflection. I asked myself, *How grateful have I truly been to my husband all this time?* My husband, who passed away ten years ago, was a quiet man who always accepted my strong spirit with kindness. Whether I was going to Australia, returning home, joining Kosei-kai, or telling him I wanted to quit my business to devote myself to dissemination, he always supported me with a gentle nod. Through *hoza*, I have reflected on my past self and can now offer even greater gratitude to my husband.



Ms. Delgoda with people who came to the Great Sacred Hall to show their support on the day of her Dharma Journey talk.

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Now, at the age of eighty-four, I am more passionate about spreading the Dharma than ever. Peace in Sri Lanka—and peace in the world—is not something that someone, somewhere, will create for us. It begins when each of us lets the Buddha within our own hearts shine, and when we respect the Buddha within the person next to us. As taught by our second minister, Rev. Suzuki, I will continue to deeply appreciate the importance of hoza. The growth of these small circles of compassion is the true path to peace. Moving forward, I will continue to share the teachings with many people through home-based hoza.

There is a proverb in Sri Lanka that says: “Even if the bullock cart is slow, if the path is right, it will

reach its destination.” There is no need to rush. We simply need to stay positive and walk the right path. Showing this attitude to our members is my practice.

In closing, I will cherish the life I have here and now and, offering my deepest gratitude to the blessings of the great universe and nature, I will continue to walk this noble path of dissemination steadily until my very last breath. Under the guidance of our current minister, Rev. Akagawa, I will strive diligently so that the beautiful lotus flowers of the Dharma will continue to bloom in all their splendor in the land of Sri Lanka.

Thank you very much for listening.



Ms. Delgoda with participants in the inauguration ceremony for Rev. Akagawa (front row, third from right), the new minister of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center.



Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now

All Our Experiences Are for the Purpose of Awakening



Dr. Dominick Scarangelo
International Advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai



For the past several columns, we have been studying the principle of the Ten Suchnesses with an eye toward eliminating suffering. It goes without saying that as Buddhists, we seek to free ourselves and others from suffering. However, in sincerely pursuing this noble aspiration, we may overlook an important aspect of the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra. Last time, we touched on this when we referred to Founder Niwano’s teaching that “All causes are good causes.” Let us explore this more deeply.

Rev. Kosho Niwano says that “By putting the teachings into practice, we were indeed liberated from the sufferings we faced in the circumstances of our lives, and this greatly transformed our lives. However, the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai are not for the purpose of eliminating our suffering” (“Rissho Kosei-kai’s Fundamental Vision 2018–2037” 16).

At first this might sound surprising. Don’t we turn to the Buddha because we want to eliminate suffering and find happiness? Isn’t suffering the problem, and isn’t Buddhist practice meant to uncover and remove its causes?

Rev. Kosho Niwano continues: “Rissho Kosei-kai is a teaching in which suffering becomes the very occasion for our liberation, just as a great lotus flower blooms precisely in the mud” (“Rissho Kosei-kai’s Fundamental Vision 2018–2037” 16).

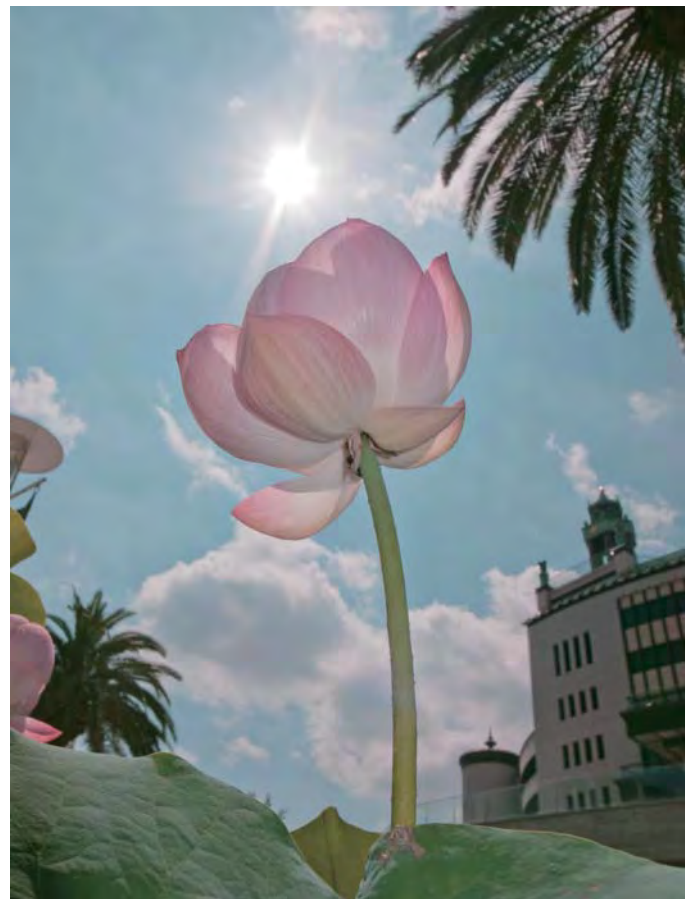
This expresses the paradox of suffering. While we seek liberation from suffering, it is through encountering and engaging with suffering that awakening becomes possible. From this standpoint, suffering can become a condition that propels us along the path toward the perfection of our character and toward lives that are more meaningful and fulfilling.

Many of you have seen the lotus garden at the Great Sacred Hall. The lotus is one of the most beau-

tiful flowers, symbolizing purity and awakening. Yet lotuses do not grow in clear, sparkling water. They grow in muddy, stagnant water that would make us sick if we drank it. The very conditions that appear impure or unpleasant are what allow the lotus to grow and bloom.

We are the same.

The Lotus Sutra teaches that anyone can become a buddha—that “The seeds of buddhahood sprout from proper conditions” (*The Threefold Lotus Sutra* 77). Yet those conditions may include the suffering we encounter in life. Shakyamuni Buddha illustrates this in chapter 12 when he explains that one of the conditions that enabled him to attain buddhahood was his



encounter in a previous lifetime with the hermit Asita, a former life of Devadatta. For many years Asita created extremely difficult circumstances for him.

Many of us know the story of Devadatta, but the Lotus Sutra radically challenges us to rethink how we understand adversity. Devadatta was not merely troublesome; he was a malicious person who committed terrible acts and caused immense suffering for many people, like other infamous villains in history. Yet Shakyamuni declares that Devadatta ultimately served as a bodhisattva who provided conditions for his awakening.

How could someone who caused such suffering be described as a bodhisattva? What made the difference?

The difference was Shakyamuni's heart and mind.

Many of us have experienced great suffering because of difficult circumstances or the actions of others. It can feel impossible to find anything meaningful or beneficial in what we have been through. Some forms of suffering are unavoidable: sickness, aging, the loss of loved ones, and ultimately, our own mortality.

The Buddha teaches that when we accept these realities—not by giving up or losing heart, but by embracing them as opportunities for awakening—their significance is transformed.

How do we do this? It is not easy to put into words, but two loved ones helped me understand the impor-

tance of this truth. Both passed away from cancer. One could not accept the diagnosis and became consumed with anger at the universe. That anger overshadowed any gratitude for having received the gift of life and for the blessings they had experienced, and it prevented them from appreciating the time that remained with family and friends. They passed in great anguish with a heart full of bitterness and resentment.

The other person responded very differently. He accepted the reality of his illness and chose to make being sick his spiritual practice. He used that time to deepen his relationships with those dear to him, and he discovered that his life was full of love. Never before had he experienced such warmth and affection. Even while facing death, he was filled with gratitude—for life and for everything it had given him. His way of accepting the situation allowed him to experience sickness itself as a condition for awakening.

Both of these people became bodhisattvas for me. Through their lives, they taught me the importance of embracing every experience for the purpose of awakening.

My hope is that I can internalize this truth and live each day with gratitude, recognizing that all the circumstances of our lives—even the most difficult—can become the conditions through which our own seeds of buddhahood blossom, beautifying our lives and the lives of those around us.





Field Report from the Sangha

Rev. Nick Ozuna

Minister, Rissho Kosei-kai of Seattle

Around this time last year, a wonderful member of deep faith and commitment to the Seattle sangha experienced a life-transforming hardship. While bike-riding on an unseasonably warm spring day, he had a heart attack and was rushed to the hospital. However, due to a momentary cardiac arrest, he was placed on life support in an induced coma. Meanwhile, his family stayed close by his side, and the sangha came together in prayer for him each day.

Miraculously, while being taken off life support one month later, he awoke! Everyone in the sangha was deeply inspired by his regaining consciousness, and once again, we held a special prayer for a speedy recovery, this time with the member on Zoom from his hospital bed. He later shared with me how grateful he had been to receive this powerful prayer during his ordeal and how it gave him strength to believe he could make a full recovery.

After some time spent regaining his ability to walk and speak, he attended a service at our Buddhist Center. The oneness shared by the sangha in seeing his presence there evoked palpable joy. He shared his immense gratitude to the Buddha, his family, the sangha, and his doctors at being alive. He said that he wanted to use his precious life to further benefit others.

He has done just that over the last several months, although still undergoing rehabilitation. However, he has noticed some setbacks with his health, both phys-

ically and mentally. Recently, he revealed to me that because of these setbacks, he questioned himself. He had done so many good deeds for years, and made sincere prayers daily, that he wanted to know why he was experiencing these hardships.

In our discussion, I asked him to recall his feelings from immediately after his recovery. This reminded him of the deep gratitude he had felt for simply being alive here and now. The reality, as his doctor told him, is that only 10 percent of patients that undergo what he went through survive. Further, there are many patients with less serious cases who, though they survive, struggle with their recovery due to feelings of anger or resentment.

Because of his challenging experience, he became aware that he can help and inspire many others who are living with such conditions. In this way, his experience has transformed from unfortunate to priceless. Surely, he has endured great hardship, but because of his lifelong faith in the Buddha's protection and guidance, he transformed his suffering into an opportunity to reflect on what it means to be given this irreplaceable life by the Buddha. This is true liberation!

Through these reflections, he regained the mind of awareness that all experiences, fortunate or otherwise, are for the purpose of awakening and therefore are precious gifts from the Buddha.



Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

Put on the Robe of the Buddha

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



Founder Niwano with his wife, Naoko, on Kumejima Island, Okinawa Prefecture, in 1984.

“Forbearance” Is Forgiving Others

Ultimately, I think “forbearance” comes down to forgiving others. Someone once said “To love is to forgive,” and those words have remained firmly in my mind. Of course, the natural affection between parents and children or romantic partners falls into a different category, but the love that arises in platonic relationships is surely, just as that saying suggests, something that is nurtured through forgiveness.

But I would like to add that to forgive is also to understand.

When I announced to the new recruits that I would not hit them, it was because I understood that no one among them would only learn if they were struck. The military was downsizing in those days, so it was extremely difficult to pass the conscription examination with the top grade and be recruited into the navy. People generally felt that it would be deeply insulting to slap such capable men. When I thought about it like that, I was naturally filled with an appreciation for the recruits, and that feeling led to my resolve: I would not strike them!

This is by no means a brag. I only intend to speak about the interconnectedness of forbearance, nonviolence, and mutual understanding from the standpoint of my own experience.



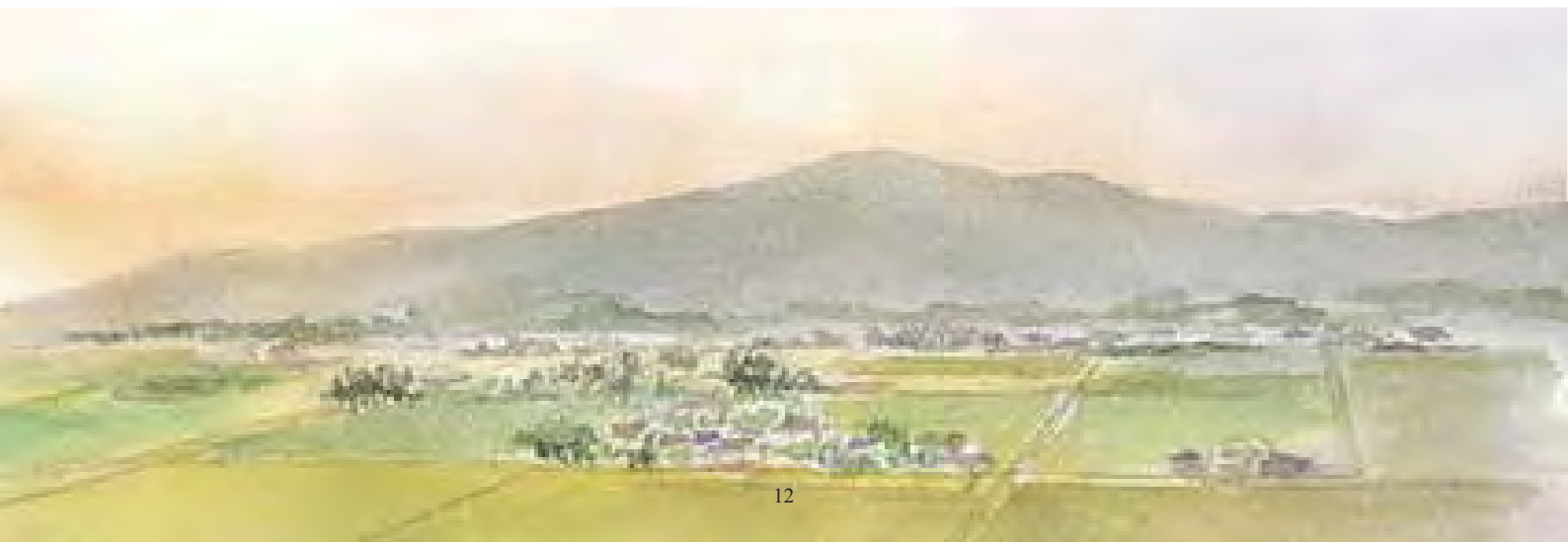
After Shakyamuni left the palace to embark on his spiritual quest, his foster mother Mahapajapati made a magnificent robe, hoping that one day he would wear it. She spun the thread herself, wove the cloth, and embroidered it with gold thread. When Shakyamuni returned to his hometown of Kapilavastu for the first time after attaining awakening, she offered the robe to him, but Shakyamuni Buddha gave it to his religious community to use. However, the robe was so splendid that no one would wear it.

Shakyamuni then instructed Maitreya Bodhisattva to wear the robe. When Maitreya put it on, the thirty-two marks (physical features) that distinguish a buddha appeared on his body. It is said that when Maitreya went out to beg for alms, the townspeople simply stared at him in wonder. They were so amazed by his appearance that they forgot to offer him food.

Even we who are alive today, twenty-five hundred years later, will surely manifest the marks of the Buddha in our demeanor if we clothe our hearts in the robes of “flexibility and forbearance.” Rather than wearing splendid clothes that cost a lot of money, this is the finest adornment for the body.

Furthermore, the virtue from that flexibility and forbearance will spread outward from each of you, like ripples on the water, transforming society, the country, and ultimately the whole world into a realm of harmony. I hope that all of you will wear the Buddha’s robe with boundless, magnanimous spirit.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 99–101



Our Mindset Shapes Our Future

Rev. Takashi Maeda
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Looking back through history, whenever society has undergone major change, there has always been a similar sense of uncertainty. Yet from those times, new ways of living and new forms of society have emerged. When we reflect on this, we realize that we too are living within such a flow of great change.

President Niwano teaches us in this month's message that whether we accept things and events with dissatisfaction and displeasure, or with joy, or with gratitude, depends entirely upon our own mind. It is not the event itself, but how we perceive it that determines whether our suffering deepens or eases. Even when faced with the same event, our state of mind changes greatly depending on whether we lament "Why is this happening to me?" or instead ask "What can I learn from this?"

That is why, rather than reacting immediately to the event, it is important for us to pause for a moment and reflect on its meaning. Buddhism teaches that all things arise through causes and conditions and are constantly changing. Both painful and joyful experiences are part of life, and they each serve as an important force that helps us grow.

Looking back, we often realize that we are who we are today precisely because of those past experiences. Rather than seeking answers outside ourselves, especially in times of anxiety and uncertainty, we should turn our attention inward. Then, let us steadily take one step that we can take right now. No matter how small that step may seem, it will never be in vain. Each sure step creates a path forward, and along that path, a new future opens before us.



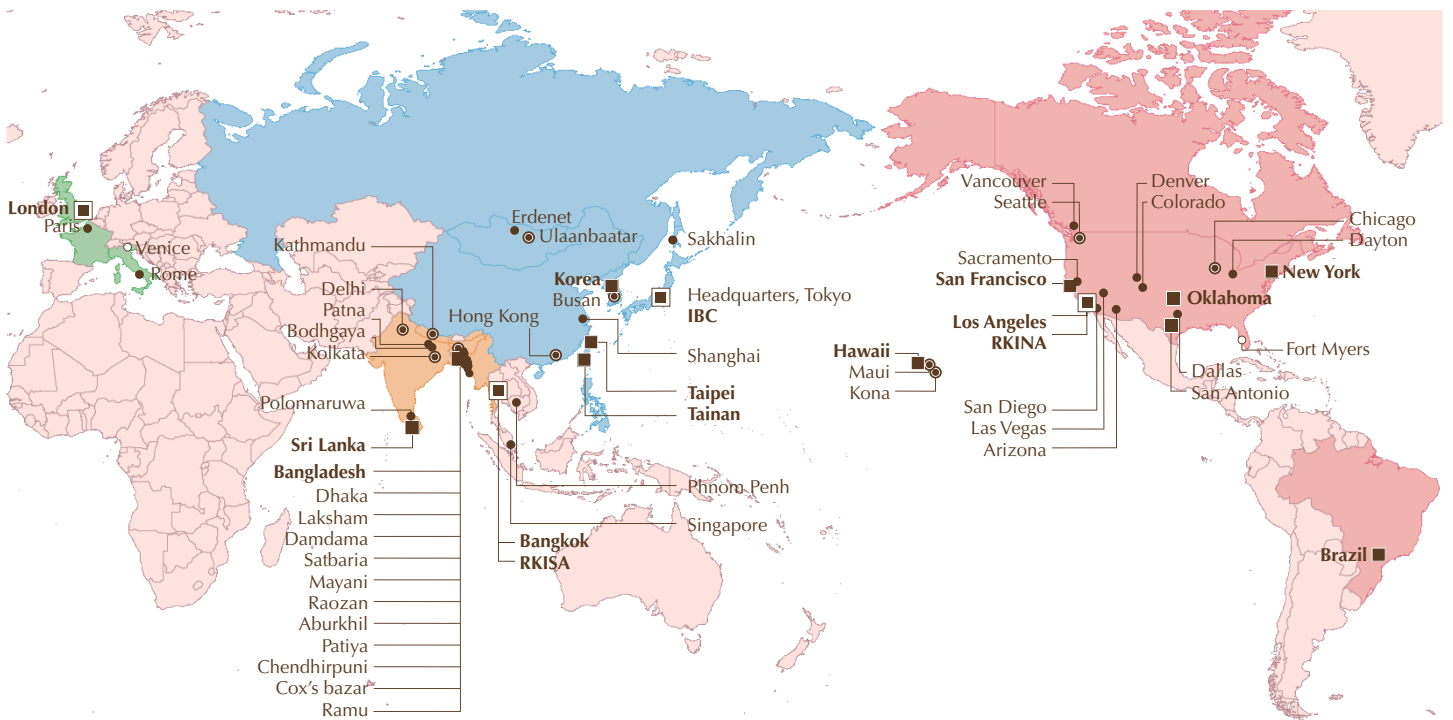
Members of the Ulaanbaatar Chapter visited headquarters in April to attend the ceremony celebrating the birth of Shakyamuni. Rev. Maeda (front row, center) and members of Rissho Kosei-kai International welcomed them at their office on April 6.

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