

Living the Lotus 7

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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RKINA Holds National Leaders Training in Los Angeles, June 5–7, with Dr. Dominick Scarangelo as Guest Lecturer

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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.

“I’m Glad to See You”

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



President Niwano reciting sutras in April during the thirty-third memorial service for his mother, Naoko Niwano, at Kosei Cemetery.

Being Open to Every Connection

“This evening, / My wife comes back to me— / Gazing up at the Ullambana moon” (Sumio Mori, *Tenjitsu* [The sun], Asahi Shimbunsha, 2001). This haiku expresses the sentiment of how sadly beautiful the moon is on the first night of the Ullambana Festival, when a man welcomes home [the spirit of] his deceased wife. The poet also seems to be telling his better half, who has predeceased him, “You would be proud of how I am living, so please don’t worry about me.”

Even if we are not bound to each other by such a profound bond as that of a married couple, none of us can live in utter solitude. True to the meaning of the Japanese word for “human being,” *ningen*, we exist “between people”—that is, we live our lives amid other people, weaving the fabric of our existence through an accumulation of encounters with people and things. As Founder Niwano so aptly put it, “our lives consist of encounters.”

However, some of our encounters may be painful, leaving us harboring resentment or hatred toward another person. In more mundane cases, we may have quite a few encounters with people we do not get along with, since everyone has different life experiences and values. At such times, we are apt to think to ourselves, “I can’t get along with someone like that” and distance ourselves from them, but for some reason, I have often found myself thinking instead that “this could be an interesting person who possesses qualities I do not,” or simply accepting that other people have their own way of seeing things.

There is a saying that “even brushing sleeves with a passerby is due to a bond from past lives,” and there is also a Buddhist teaching, “the people you talk to or sit with have gone through five hundred lifetimes together with you.” Given that even a chance encounter on the street is believed to be rooted in a deep karmic connection from the past, it would be a shame to deem an encounter good or bad based solely on what suits you or your mood at the time.

The poet Shuntaro Tanikawa (1931–2024) once said, “Thanks to my encounters with other people, I have been able to encounter myself” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, *Kyoiku iinkai geppo* [Board of Education monthly report], March 2025, https://www.mext.go.jp/content/20250310-mxt_syoto01-000040534_6.pdf.pdf). Encounters with people can reveal facets of our own character that we are unaware of, and getting to know the views of those who disagree with our opinions may serve as a whetstone that sharpens our own perspective. It is often said that knowing an equal number of people who agree with you and disagree with you is vital for the refinement of your personality and improving your humanity, and in this sense, I believe that being open to every connection and receptive toward other people makes our lives richer.

Reencountering Those Who Have Passed Away

That said, it is certainly difficult to gladly accept disagreeable situations or people we dislike. Fortunately for us, though, thanks to the Buddha, we can face such people and situations somewhat gladly. In Rissho Kosei-kai, when we are facing people or situations that we find disagreeable, we take the opportunity to reflect on what the Buddha might be teaching us through the experience and calmly consider why we perceive something as distasteful, asking ourselves what is really important right now. This habitual practice of aligning our thinking with the Buddha’s leads to an open and receptive mind.

When we think very deeply, we particularly see that our encounters with others arise from a mysterious convergence of a variety of ongoing causes and conditions. In a standard dictionary, the Japanese word *en*, “connection” or “karmic connection,” is defined as “a mysterious force, transcending human agency, that binds people together,” so we can only conclude that whoever we have encountered, we were supposed to encounter them. With this in mind, I hope we can all sincerely say, “I’m glad to see you”—not only to our spouses, parents, children, brothers, and sisters but to everyone we encounter—because I believe that interacting with one another amicably, with smiling faces, is a way of life that agrees with the principle of dependent origination, which teaches us that all things are interconnected.

The Ullambana Festival will soon be upon us, and we will again encounter the spirits of our ancestors and family members who have passed away. Reflecting on the old days, we will surely deepen our feelings of nostalgia and gratitude as we tell them, “I’m glad to see you.” At the same time, as we contemplate our gratitude for the life that each of us is currently living, passages from *Kyoten* recitation—such as Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures and the Universal Transfer of Merit—will resonate within us more deeply than ever, renewing our resolve to live in a way that honors the memory of the departed.

From *Kosei*, July 2026



For the Peace of Our Families, Society, and the World, I Want to Share the Importance of Changing Ourselves First

Ms. Sumi Barua, Bangladesh Dharma Center

When did you begin practicing the faith of Rissho Kosei-kai, and what prompted you to do so?

My father joined Rissho Kosei-kai around 2000, when it was first established in Bangladesh, so I am a second-generation member. For many years, my father served as a chapter head and devoted himself to sharing the Buddha's teachings to help others find liberation. When I was small, he often took me to the Dharma center, where I played with friends my age and recited sutra. I still remember those days. Sadly, when I was only eleven years old, my father passed away from a heart attack at the age of forty-five. I felt that carrying on his aspirations would give me the strength to overcome my grief, so I began participating in youth-group activities. A major turning point in my faith came in 2017 when I attended a youth seminar at the Bangladesh Dharma Center for the first time and listened to one of Founder Nikkyo Niwano's Dharma talks on video.

Founder Niwano said, "If the purpose of human life were merely to eat and survive, there would be no difference between human beings and other living creatures. If we truly wish to be happy, we must abandon self-centeredness and devote ourselves to the happiness of others."

These words deeply moved me and inspired me to think seriously about what I could do for the happiness of others. At that time, I was working as a private tutor, so as a way to put these thoughts into action, I began offering free lessons to many students who were struggling financially and couldn't afford school tuition. Spending time with them and watching them grow brought me profound joy.

Furthermore, the Bangladesh Dharma Center has more than thirty graduates of Gakurin Seminary, who actively serve as leaders both in the Dharma centers



Ms. Sumi Barua shares her Dharma Journey upon graduating from Gakurin Seminary.

and in their local communities. Witnessing their dedication strengthened my wish to learn the Buddha's teachings more deeply and become someone who can be of service to others. This ultimately led me to enroll in Gakurin Seminary.

You graduated from Gakurin's International Program this March. At your graduation research presentation, you spoke on the theme "Self-Awareness and Family Education." What led you to choose this theme?

Through my nearly eight years of experience as a private tutor in Bangladesh, I learned that many fami-

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lies, despite being financially privileged, suffer distress caused by conflict between spouses and estrangement between parents and children. This experience convinced me that peace within the family exists on a different level from material prosperity and is greatly influenced by the quality of daily family relationships and the attitudes people hold in their hearts. That realization motivated me to choose this theme. I believe that the family is a vital place where children find emotional security and develop their character, and that family education is the starting point of all education. Furthermore, while living alongside friends from diverse cultural backgrounds at Gakurin Seminary and engaging with the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai, I came to deeply understand an important perspective that improving relationships begins not by trying to change others, but by changing our own ways of seeing and acting. This insight became a fundamental basis for my understanding of family harmony and peace.

Now you have returned home, how do you plan to put this theme into practice?

The Bangladesh Dharma Center currently holds regular family education seminars, mainly for mothers raising children. I hope to become actively involved in these seminars. In addition, I would like to work with leaders who have studied family education to



Ms. Barua and her classmates, along with junior students in Gakurin's International Program, harvest the rice they grew.

organize workshops and family education programs for young people. Through these efforts, I hope to contribute, even in a small way, to building peaceful families in Bangladesh.

Are there any teachings or words from Founder Niwano or President Nichiko Niwano that are especially important to you?

One teaching from Founder Niwano that remains deeply engraved in my heart is the importance of “seeing things as they truly are.” In our daily lives, we often view things through the filters of our self-centered perspectives, prejudices, and preconceived notions. As a result, we judge things according to our personal likes and dislikes or our own standards of right and wrong, making it difficult to perceive reality as it truly is. I believe the Founder taught us that by studying and practicing the Buddha’s teachings and cultivating wisdom, we can truly see things as they are.

As for President Niwano, he frequently emphasizes in his Dharma talks the importance of building harmony in the family. He teaches that by cultivating our own minds, regulating our behaviors, and bringing harmony to our families, we contribute to peace in our nations and throughout the world. Inspired by this teaching, I hope to share the importance of both family education and the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai with many people so that families can build warm, compassionate relationships based on mutual respect, where words such as “thank you” and “I’m sorry” can be expressed sincerely and naturally.

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

What fascinates me the most is that members greet everyone with a smile and by putting their palms together in reverence. Seeing those smiles always fills me with happiness. At the same time, I realize that when I greet others with a smile, it surely makes them feel happy too. So, I have made it a practice to greet everyone I meet with a smile.

I am also deeply moved by the warmth and kind-

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ness of the sangha. Guided by the Buddha's teachings, members share in one another's suffering, sorrow, and joy as if they were their own, growing close to one another. That is why I believe that even when I am facing great worries or anxieties, I can move forward in life with confidence, knowing that I am never alone. The sangha is always beside me, encouraging me, and praying for my happiness.

Finally, what are your goals for your future practice?

For now, I would like to share with the young members of the Bangladesh Dharma Center the many experiences and merits I received in Japan, including my life and training at Gakurin Seminary and my

Dharma dissemination training at the Ota Dharma Center. I hope to do so with a deep sense of gratitude. Through my study of family education based on the Lotus Sutra and the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai, I have become convinced that peace within the family begins with personal transformation. That transformation influences family relationships, and peaceful family relationships spread outward to society, ultimately contributing to world peace. For this reason, I want to keep the teaching that "if I change, others will change" firmly in mind. My goal for future practice is to share the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, which enable all people to find happiness, with as many people as possible.



Ms. Barua (front row, fourth from right) with lecturers and fellow students at Gakurin Seminary during the Gakurin Walk.

Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now



Delusion and Awakening are Inseparable

Dr. Dominick Scarangelo
International Advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai



Last time we considered how accepting the difficulties in life as opportunities for personal growth and awakening can greatly transform our experience of life and allow us to, even within those very difficulties, discover a freedom from suffering. This time, we'll consider a closely related topic: our relationship to our own delusions.

As Shakyamuni Buddha showed us, transcending suffering comes through awakening. We might think, then, that our first priority should be to totally eliminate all our delusions and awaken as quickly as possible. But like our relationship with the difficulties we face in life, here too, categorically negating our delusions may not be the wisest approach.

You may have come across this paradoxical line in the closing sutra, “The Sutra of the Method for Contemplating the Bodhisattva Universal Sage”: “Bodhisattva practice is neither cutting off the bindings of delusions nor sinking in the sea of delusions” (*The Threefold Lotus Sutra* 404). Why would the Buddha tell us to neither cut off our delusions nor allow ourselves to wallow in them?

Before embarking on his spiritual quest, Shakyamuni Buddha lived a life of excess as his country's crown prince, freely indulging his various desires. But realizing the emptiness of such a life, he made the decision to leave the palace and seek the answer to human suffering. In the mountains and forests, he threw himself into severe ascetic practices to eradicate those delusive desires. It is said that he ate as little as a single grain of rice a day. Yet even after six years, this self-mortification failed to eliminate his delusions, and one day he simply abandoned those practices. Why? Because he realized that such extreme self-denial is simply attachment in

reverse—we remain ruled by delusive desires. Negation is not transcendence.

We can understand this through our own experiences of attempting to give up some habit. For example, I've tried to swear off certain snacks, like Doritos, but oftentimes I've just ended up buying the party-size bag at a convenience store and eating the entire bag myself. The negation of our appetites can actually strengthen them. And even if we were able to snap our fingers and make our delusions and desires instantly disappear, we would lose the opportunity to discover what lies beneath them. Since they are symptoms of deeper, underlying issues, we need to listen to what they can teach us about ourselves, rather than simply negate them.

Here again, Rev. Kosho has some wise words for us. “We are neither good nor bad people. We are many selves: we can be kind or cold, compassionate or abusive according to how our circumstances change. There is no need to fear our inadequacies or shortcomings. For those very inadequacies are the engine that drives us toward happiness” (“Rissho



Kosei-kai's Fundamental Vision 2018–2037” 18).

Much like the troubles in our lives, our delusions also provide opportunities for growth and self-development if we respond to them properly. This is why we should not simply negate them—to do so would be to throw away opportunities for awakening.

In Buddhism it is often said that “delusion and awakening are inseparable.” What stance, then, should we take toward our delusions?

Again, Rev. Kosho teaches: “Let us not turn our eyes away from our imperfect selves but instead look directly into our delusions and desires. Within our very inadequacies lie the seeds of happiness, and through connecting with others, the story of each member creating a way of life through facing oneself and connecting with others begins to move forward” (“Rissho Kosei-kai's Fundamental Vision 2018–2037” 18).

If we look deeply into our delusions and desires, they have much to tell us. By openly sharing our experiences with others, and by listening to their experiences as well, we can help one another discover that there are actually bodhisattva aspirations within our delusions—the desire for ourselves

and others to be happy. And that is the discovery of buddha nature within us.

Recently, at the Flower Festival of the International Buddhist Congregation (a Rissho Kosei-kai outreach group for non-Japanese residents of Japan), Mr. Go Tokuka, a member from Tokyo, expressed this teaching in wonderfully poetic words during a spiritual journey talk; I would like to close by sharing a portion of his talk.

Through the Buddha's teachings,
I am beginning to learn
that I do not need to fight my attachments.
Instead,
I can gently look at them,
accept them,
and little by little, learn to let them go.
The most important thing I have gained is this—
To be honest, I am not yet fully confident,
and I am still on the path.
But little by little, I am beginning to feel that
the Buddha is not somewhere far away,
but that buddha nature may already exist
within me.



Field Report from the Sangha

Rev. Takashi Yoshizawa

Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International of North America

One day, I received a phone call from Ms. H, a member who works as a manager for a home care agency. She told me she was confused after receiving a sudden court notice informing her that Mr. B, a caregiver who had worked under her, had filed a lawsuit against the company.

According to the complaint, Mr. B filed the lawsuit because he “was treated unfairly in the workplace,” “was subjected to verbal abuse and discrimination by clients, yet the situation was not adequately addressed,” and “was not given enough work, causing him financial hardship.”

When I asked about the circumstances leading up

to the lawsuit, Ms. H explained that there had been very few clients whose needs matched Mr. B's qualifications and availability at the time, and as a result, the company had no choice but to reduce his assignments, for which she felt genuinely sorry. Ms. H also said that since she had been preparing for a long-term trip back to her home country around that time, she was unable to fully address the issue before handing it over to a colleague, which left her with a sense of regret. She added that the lawsuit was filed shortly after she returned to work.

When I asked about the current status of the case, she told me: “We responded through the court with



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supporting evidence and copies of the employment agreement, but the other party was not satisfied with our explanation and seems determined to pursue the matter to the very end.”

When I spoke with Ms. H during Dharma circle and over the telephone, I recommended that she try to carefully and objectively observe her own feelings, as though through the eyes of another self. Later, in response, she honestly shared with me that when she had first learned of the lawsuit, she asked herself “Why me?” and felt betrayed by Mr. B. She also shared how various other emotions, such as frustration toward her colleagues and regret over her own naivety, had welled up one after another.

A few days later, Ms. H contacted me again and said, “I became able to see many attachments and emotions that I was previously unaware of. And rather than getting caught up in Mr. B’s outward words and actions, I found myself reflecting on the suffering and feelings he must have experienced before filing the lawsuit, and I realized that I was trying to empathize with him. I tried not to deny the thoughts and emotions that arose within me but instead accepted them. Then I reviewed them in light of the teachings and worked to bring my mind into balance.” I suggested that during her morning sutra recitation, she connect her heart not only to her own ancestors but also to the ancestors of Mr. B and seek the meaning of this karmic connection.

A few weeks later, during Dharma circle, Ms. H shared her resulting reflection and realization: “Mr. B had already been accumulating dissatisfaction toward the company before I became his supervisor. I kept asking myself, ‘Why did this happen during my time?’ However, I gradually came to accept it, thinking ‘perhaps the Buddha is giving me the spiritual training I need at this point in my life,’ and my mind slowly became calmer. When I looked even deeper into my heart, I realized that I had been wishing to practice spiritual discipline. As Rev. Yoshizawa often teaches us, the Buddha grants us what we truly wish

for. The real challenge is whether we can gratefully accept it when that deepest wish manifests itself in the form of actual circumstances.” As she shared these words, I could only nod in agreement.

From the very first day Ms. H consulted me, my sole prayer was for the best possible outcome for both Ms. H and Mr. B. After nearly six months of exchanges and legal proceedings, the day of the trial finally arrived.

Later, Ms. H called me to report what had happened. She also shared her experience during Dharma circle: “On the morning of the trial, as I was offering sutra recitation, I understood what it meant when people say, ‘Everything happens through the Buddha’s compassion.’ At that moment, it felt as though something within me quietly settled into place. The trial ended in a completely unexpected way. The plaintiff reportedly rushed to the court a little late and told the judge that he had to board a flight immediately due to an emergency in his family. The judge explained that if he withdrew the lawsuit, he would not be able to file the same claim again. Mr. B accepted the terms, and the case was dismissed on the spot. I felt there was great significance in the fact that it ended without anyone being deeply hurt, and it was not simply a matter of winning or losing. Through this personal experience, I was able to deeply engrave in my heart the truth that when we walk in accordance with the teachings, the Buddha will show us the best path.”

A year has passed since then. I am truly happy and moved that Ms. H, without denying the emotions and attachments that had taken root in her heart, was able to recognize her true wishes by looking deeply into them and turn the ordeal of the lawsuit into an opportunity for spiritual growth. Together with everyone in the sangha, I would like to deeply reflect on the meaning of repaying our debt of gratitude toward the gods and buddhas and toward all our ancestors—a lesson we have learned from Ms. H’s experience.



Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

Put on the Robe of the Buddha

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



A Society That Has Lost Its Rigor

In recent years, there has been a series of crimes that seem to defy common sense. Cases such as the abduction and murder of young girls or setting fire to the factory where one works because one has grown sick of the job are so abnormal that we can only shake our heads.

But when television reporters interview the perpetrators' neighbors, the response is usually something like, "He was always a quiet but friendly person," or "He was responsible and hard working." How can we make any sense of this?

According to psychologists, because such people were coddled and raised in an overly protective environment, they failed to develop a temperament capable of coping with the harsh realities of society. Lacking the motivation to obtain what they desire through proper means, they end up taking shortcuts that ordinary people would never even consider.

And even if they do not go so far as to commit abnormal crimes, these days we often hear about boys and girls who are apathetic, emotionally fragile, and liable to take their own lives over



seemingly trivial things. Nor is this limited to adolescents. Even among young and middle-aged adults, there is a growing number of people who lack qualities like perseverance and determination and who are easily discouraged. This, too, is said to be the result of having been raised in an overly indulgent manner.

When we reflect on all of this, we are forced to realize that raising children requires not only kindness but also toughness. Incidentally, even among birds and animals, newborns are groomed and nurtured with affection until they grow and approach the time to leave the nest. Then, their parents gradually push them away, encouraging them to learn how to protect themselves from the dangers of nature and predators.

The same is even true of plants, such as flowering trees and fruit trees. If they are pampered too much and given excessive fertilizer or water, they will produce neither beautiful flowers nor good fruit. It is necessary to prune their branches and leaves appropriately to draw out enough vitality to overcome adversity. Human beings, too, are living creatures, and so it's the same with us.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 102–03



Learning from, and Being Grateful for, Encounters

Rev. Takashi Maeda
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. The title of President Niwano's message for this month is, "I'm Glad to See You." If we could always approach our family members, friends, coworkers, and neighbors with this heartfelt feeling, how much warmer and more joyful our daily lives would be.

Founder Niwano taught us that life consists of encounters. Our lives are shaped by the people we meet. Through each and every encounter, we ourselves are developed and refined.

In our daily lives, we often unconsciously judge things as good or bad, or right or wrong. However, when we become convinced that our own way of thinking is the only correct way, we develop what Buddhism calls "attachment." As a result, we may end up rejecting or criticizing those whose values differ from our own.

Yet, encounters with people who have different perspectives—or even with those we find difficult to get along with—can be valuable opportunities for learning. The President has shared that when meeting people with different viewpoints, he has simply accepted them by thinking, "Other people have their own way of seeing things." From his example, we learn the importance of accepting each encounter just as it is.

The Lotus Sutra teaches that the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World appears in thirty-three different forms in order to guide people. In other words, every person we meet may be a precious reminder that helps us recognize the limitations of our own perspective and the narrowness of our hearts.

This month, with a heart of gratitude that says "I'm glad to see you," let us cherish each encounter and continue walking the path of daily practice.



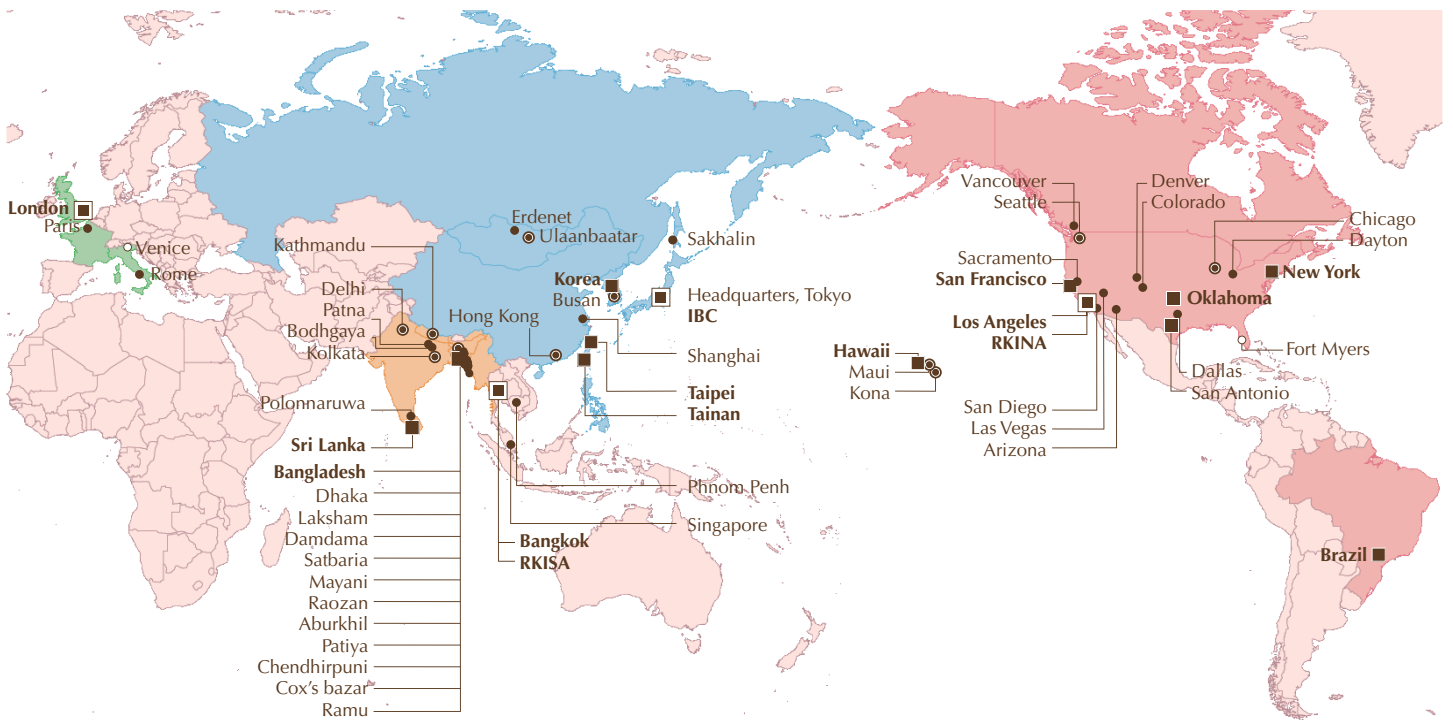
Members of Rissho Kosei-kai of Korea welcome Rev. Maeda (front row, center) at their Dharma center on May 11.

Rissho Kosei-kai International

Make Every Encounter Matter



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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