

Living the Lotus 8

Buddhism in Everyday Life

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**Dharma Centers Across India Observe Ancestor Veneration Weeks, July 1–15:
Members Perform the Ullambana Ceremony on July 15 with Hearts Full of Gratitude**

Living the Lotus Vol. 251 (August 2026)

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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.

Light a Fire for the Sake of Other People

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



President Niwano participates in the June rice-planting festival in the paddy fields cultivated by Gakurin Seminary students near the Ome Retreat Center.

When We Say “For the Sake of Others,” Who Do We Mean?

We often speak casually about the blessings of the karmic connections through which we support one another and live our lives. Sayings such as “in times of need, help each other out” and “a journey is made by companions, and the world is made by kindness” reflect sentiments that have long been accepted as a matter of course in Japan.

I mentioned Japan just now, but in the Republic of Ghana in Africa, there is also a belief deeply rooted in the minds of many people that “no matter how destitute you may become, you will never be left to die by the wayside.” In other words, someone will always be there to support or help you. Because Ghanaians mutually share this belief, they can live their lives with a cheerful, positive outlook. Of course, I believe that everywhere in the world, there are cultures and proverbs that express values and customs premised on this kind of mutual support among human beings.

In a similar vein, there is the very familiar Japanese proverb, “Your kindness is not only for the sake of others.” Obviously, this proverb means that if you show consideration for other people, your kindness will eventually find its way back to you. That is, “In this world, we all have to live together.”

To quote an easily understandable teaching of Nichiren’s that conveys the merits and significance of generosity, “When you give something to someone else, you are helping yourself, just as lighting a fire for someone else lights the path before you.” This teaching resonates with the proverb “your kindness is not only for the sake of others.” These days, however, I hear that some people harbor doubts or feel uneasy about the concept and practice of benefiting other people. A fair number of people perceive benefiting others as a form of self-sacrifice. They are reluctant to see it as a virtue and dislike devoting their time to something for the sake of other people.

In this day and age, how can we foster societies that are easy to live in, where everyone is kind to one another, and where the spirit of living together and the spirit of reciprocity—the great foundation of human life—develop effortlessly in every quarter?

Volunteers Are Bodhisattvas

I imagine that some people will take advantage of their summer vacation to dedicate their time to other people and engage in volunteer activities.

While the term “volunteer” refers to someone who is moved by compassion and voluntarily serves those in need, the concept of service also means serving the gods and the buddhas. In years past, when I visited regions affected by disasters—including the sites of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake (which marked its thirtieth anniversary last year), the Great East Japan Earthquake, and the Kumamoto Earthquake—I was deeply inspired by the attitude of the volunteers who were working tirelessly to help the victims, just as if they were performing service to the gods and the buddhas or ministering to precious lives. From the bottom of my heart, I felt that these individuals were surely bodhisattvas. Whenever I come in contact with such volunteer bodhisattvas, their work reminds me that people possess a desire to find happiness with others, not merely by themselves.

On the other hand, some people cannot accept the idea of doing things for the sake of others, and it might actually be counterproductive to tell them that “in this world, we all have to live together.” Everyone has their own way of thinking, and I believe that trying to impose your values on others may only push them further away.

However, the Buddhist teaching of “the mutual inclusion of the ten realms” means that every mind mutually possesses every other mind in the ten realms of living beings, and therefore, we all inherently possess the mind of a buddha or a bodhisattva and can feel the desire to improve the world. If you believe this and use your physical and mental capabilities to serve others, even those people who may not believe it will be impressed by your actions. This will communicate to them the joy of selfless dedication and the truth that in this world, we all have to live together. It is important that, through just such a positive attitude, every one of us embodies and transmits a culture of being considerate of others.

Looking at the current state of affairs, though, we cannot say that everyone has an easy time living in this world. In the next issue, I would like to touch upon everyday practices that can help us live together in harmony.

From *Kosei*, August 2026



Cherishing Every Encounter to Bring Many People Happiness by Guiding Them Toward the Buddha's Teachings

Ms. Bayanjav Oyungerel, Rissho Kosei-kai of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

When and how did you join Rissho Kosei-kai?

In 2015, guided by my eldest daughter's mother-in-law, I joined Rissho Kosei-kai, and I am very grateful for that today.

The moment I heard her say "a Japanese Buddhist organization," memories of my husband undergoing surgery for a brain tumor at a Japanese hospital in 2007 came flooding back. My husband was left with some paralysis after his surgery, but he is in good health now and doing very well. Since that time, I have felt a very close connection to Japan and to the Japanese people. Because of these circumstances, I was grateful to become a member of Rissho Kosei-kai.

Please share any experiences you have had since joining Rissho Kosei-kai in which the Buddha's teachings helped you change your mindset.

I regard the *hoza*, or "Dharma circle," of Rissho Kosei-kai as a place where we learn, together, how to

live according to the Buddha's teachings and as the place where I transformed my heart. Before joining Rissho Kosei-kai, I kept my worries to myself, trying to handle everything on my own. When I sat in a *hoza* session for the first time, I was truly moved to see everyone in the sangha openly sharing their struggles without holding anything back.

When I first joined Rissho Kosei-kai, I was devoting myself wholeheartedly to caring for my husband, helping him with his daily life, and I was quite exhausted, both physically and mentally. I thought, "This is just how I feel, so there is no point in telling anyone. . . . After all, this is my life." Due to my strong sense of self and my competitive nature, I kept my feelings to myself and could not bring myself to confide in anyone. However, during the *hoza* session, the senior leaders and members of the sangha gently reached out to me, saying things like, "It must have been hard for you up until now," and "You've done a great job persevering on your own." Their encouragement allowed me to honestly pour out what was in my heart. Speaking honestly helped me start thinking positively about things, and my mind became peaceful.

That *hoza* was a major turning point in your life, wasn't it?

As I listened to members speak at *hoza*, I came to deeply reflect on the fact that, out of concern for my husband, who needs assistance, I had failed to understand his desire to do things for himself. My misguided approach—trying to do everything for him—had actually been making him uncomfortable.

Since then, I have respected my husband's wishes, letting him handle whatever he can on his own and offering support only for the things he cannot do. I assist him only when necessary for his daily activi-



Ms. Bayanjav Oyungerel delivers a Dharma Journey talk at the ceremony marking the twenty-second anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai of Ulaanbaatar.

Interview

ties, striving to ensure that daily life itself serves as part of his rehabilitation. After shifting my mindset by changing my own thoughts and attitudes through the teachings, my relationship with my husband has improved. Now, whenever I see my husband helping with the housework, I feel confident and joyful, and most importantly, he has come to support my practice in Rissho Kosei-kai.

While learning the Buddha's teachings, are there any points you keep in your mind?

“Everything is interconnected”—this teaching, dependent origination, is what I feel most personally in my daily life. Also, precisely because everything exists through interdependence, I am interested in the teaching “all things are nonself,” that is, nothing exists independently or on its own. There is a famous proverb in Mongolia that says, “One person alone does not make a family, and a single log cannot keep a fire burning.” This proverb illustrates how cooperation and unity are essential among family and com-



Ms. Bayanjav (second from left) participating in the Enrollment and Graduation Ceremony (for children entering or graduating each spring) and Cherry Blossom Viewing, held by the Minami-Tama Dharma Center in Tokyo on April 4. She was in Japan as part of a group pilgrimage for the anniversary of Shakyamuni's birth.



While in Japan for the group pilgrimage, Ms. Bayanjav (third from right in the middle row) visited the office of Rissho Kosei-kai International with members of Rissho Kosei-kai of Ulaanbaatar.

panions in Mongolia's harsh natural environment and nomadic way of life. At the same time, I realized the proverb shares many commonalities with the concepts of interdependence as taught in the truth of dependent origination and the doctrine of “all things are nonself.” And I was reminded once again that we do not live alone, but rather that we are sustained by helping and supporting one another within the bonds and relationships we share with our families and those around us.

What do you find most appealing about Rissho Kosei-kai?

I believe that the sutra recitation of Rissho Kosei-kai is an important practice that helps us recognize the preciousness of life, which we have inherited from our ancestors. Every morning and evening, whenever I offer sutra recitation, I feel an indescribable sense of refreshment, and I always express my gratitude to the Buddha and my ancestors. In Mongolia, many people traditionally practice Tibetan Buddhism, and I used to visit temples to listen to monks chant sutras and explain Buddhist teachings, but since everything was in Tibetan, I could not understand a word. However, what I find appealing about Rissho Kosei-kai is that I can perform sutra recitation using the sutra

readings in my native language, Mongolian. I feel truly grateful that I can experience the Buddha's teachings up close every day and fully understand their meaning. Today, I have come to love reciting sutras, and thankfully, I have even begun reciting the Mongolian-language edition of *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*. I also read the President's monthly message with sincere gratitude.

Finally, could you share your current wish and goals for your future practice?

Out of gratitude for having encountered the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai, I have guided six relatives and friends to the faith. One of them, my sister-in-law Erdenechimeg, is a diligent person whose buddha nature shines brightly, and she has also received the Dharma Teacher qualification. In the autumn of 2024, my sister-in-law and I received the *Gohonzon* from Rev. Hidemitsu Suzuki, deputy director of Rissho Kosei-kai International, and enshrined it in our respective homes. I will continue cherishing every single encounter, helping as many people as possible find happiness by guiding them to these precious

teachings—that is my greatest wish right now and the goal of my practice. And I hope that, through the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, each and every one of the people I guide will come to realize the noble buddha nature that they inherently possess and let their own lives shine even more brightly.

I am truly happy that this year, together with my son Sanchir and my two grandchildren, I was able to participate in a group pilgrimage for the anniversary of Shakyamuni's birth, visit the Great Sacred Hall, and learn the Buddha's teachings. I accept this as a testament to my faith—the result of practicing the teachings of the Buddha and Rissho Kosei-kai in my home—and I am truly grateful. I intend to continue striving every day to put into practice what I have learned at Rissho Kosei-kai, while hoping that my faith will be passed down to my children and grandchildren.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Ms. Shuger Zorigmaa, chapter head of Rissho Kosei-kai of Ulaanbaatar, as well as to the other chapter leaders and all members.



With Rev. Masayuki Idei (former headquarters official), who participated as a lecturer in the ceremony marking the twenty-second anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai of Ulaanbaatar. From left: Sanchir, Ms. Bayanjav's son; her granddaughter; Rev. Idei; and Ms. Bayanjav.

Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now

The Lotus Sutra and the Four Noble Truths



Dr. Dominick Scarangelo
International Advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai



The Truth of Suffering: The Gap Between Our Wishes and Reality

This month, I'd like to begin an exploration of the Four Noble Truths with all of you. Discussions of Buddhism normally begin with the Four Noble Truths, but in order to understand them from the perspective of the Lotus Sutra, we have waited until now.

When Shakyamuni Buddha first turned the Wheel of the Dharma and began teaching, it is said that he introduced the Four Noble Truths. These four principles are often likened to a doctor's diagnosis and prescription for healing a patient's illness. The first of the Four Noble Truths is the diagnosis of humanity's spiritual illness: suffering. The Buddha proposes that life, as we ordinarily live it, is full of suffering. But what is suffering?

The word "suffering" makes us think of extreme distress, sickness, and pain. The sutras often speak of the four sufferings: birth, aging, sickness, and death. If these alone defined suffering, many of us might think suffering is something that mainly affects us at the end of life and question the Buddha's assertion that life is full of suffering.



However, "birth" and "aging, sickness, and death" also have other meanings in the context of our experience of ordinary life. Because we make arbitrary judgments about what is good and bad, or desirable and undesirable, "birth" occurs—the arising of suffering (*Buddhism for Today*, 156). We can think of "aging, sickness, and death" as our struggle with this suffering, or the distress or anxiety we often feel when any situation we cling to changes, deteriorates, and comes to an end. Seen from this perspective, I think most people can agree that the Buddha was right. We undergo this kind of cycle of experience every day of our lives. Life is indeed full of suffering!

This explanation also reveals the fundamental meaning of suffering, which is *dukkha* in Pali. As President Niwano describes it, suffering arises when things do not go as we wish. In other words, when the Buddha says life is full of suffering, he means that things often fail to conform to our wishes. The feelings we experience in the gap between our wishes and reality are suffering. This is why the Buddha also described suffering as separation from what we love, the inability to escape what we hate, and the failure to obtain what we want. These are familiar examples of things not going as we wish.

According to the Buddha, to live happier and more fulfilling lives, we must first recognize that life is full of suffering, and then recognize suffering itself when it arises. This may sound strange, but we often fail to recognize our own suffering. The Buddha observed that we frequently mistake suffering for happiness. As a result, we continue patterns of thought and action that eventually bring us much hurt and sorrow.

Thus, practicing the Truth of Suffering means recognizing existentially that life is replete with suffering and, in the world of everyday experience, learning to recognize suffering when it appears.

How can we better recognize suffering? One way is to pay attention to our feelings whenever things do not go as we wish. At such times, we are likely to experience inner distress and anxiety, though we may not immediately recognize them. Another signal is the appearance of the mindsets of the six realms, especially the “four evil paths”: hells, hungry spirits, beasts, and asuras.

Whenever anger and hatred, desire, ignorance, or jealousy arise, we are reacting to the gap between the way we wish things would be and how they actually are. We may feel anger or hatred when someone or something acts contrary to our wishes. Desire usually appears when we seek satisfaction but cannot attain it. Ignorance is the experience of our minds not being as keen and effective as we would like. Jealousy may take hold of us when others seem to obtain more of what they wish than we do. Ultimately, all these are

forms of distress we may experience when things don’t go as we wish.

Often, we do not initially experience these states as suffering. For example, we may momentarily feel vindicated when we lash out in anger at someone who has not acted as we wished. This is often the way our unawakened minds initially misperceive suffering as pleasure.

Therefore, whenever these mindsets arise, even if we do not feel distressed, we should take them as signs that we are experiencing suffering—the gap between our wishes and reality.

Finally, our bodies can provide another clue. During our study of the Ten Suchnesses, we learned that “such an embodiment” refers to our entity, the totality of body and mind. Even when our conscious minds are unaware of suffering, it may manifest as physiological changes in our bodies.

Through mindfulness and “bodyfulness,” we can practice the Noble Truth of Suffering by recognizing when we are distressed by the gap between our wishes and reality.





Field Report from the Sangha

Rev. Keiichi Akagawa, Minister of the Sri Lanka Dharma Center and
the Bangladesh Dharma Center

The Parent-Child Bond That Overcame Suffering

In this month's installment of "Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now," we explore the first of the Four Noble Truths, the Truth of Suffering. The Buddha teaches that suffering arises when reality does not unfold as we wish. Whenever our hopes and reality are far apart, we experience deep anguish. An encounter with a couple who recently visited the Bangladesh Dharma Center profoundly reminded me of the essence of the Truth of Suffering and of the dignity and resilience of the human spirit that can rise above suffering.

The couple had a son, who worked for a bank. One day, they came to see me, looking deeply distressed. "Our son has suddenly stopped talking to us," they said. "He seems to be avoiding us, and we don't know what to do." As I listened closely to their story, the harsh reality their son was facing gradually came to light. According to the parents, although he had achieved outstanding savings-acquisition results, his Muslim, female supervisor, who was jealous of his abilities, stole them all, reporting his achievements as her own. With the senior management around him consisting almost entirely of Muslims, no matter how strongly he complained about his boss's misconduct, no one listened to him, and his boss was not held accountable. Faced with the harsh realities of living as a member of a minority group, he found himself on the brink of despair and was closing himself off emotionally.

The son was left wondering, Why is it that the person who does the right thing is the one who suffers? For him, this unjust reality, which was completely beyond his control, created unbearable suffering. His parents, too, were consumed by anxiety as they watched their son suffer, and a heavy shadow had settled over their family.

Instead of joining the parents in condemning the injustice and criticizing society, I quietly reflected on the emotional pain their son must be carrying. Then I said to the parents: "Your son must have been carrying this burden all by himself because he did not want to cause you any worry. He is truly a kind and caring son who loves his parents very deeply."

The moment those words were spoken, large tears began streaming down the mother's face. It was not a judgmental comment about society's injustice that touched her heart, but a few compassionate words that acknowledged their son's wounded heart. These simple words seemed to gently melt away the burden that had weighed so heavily on both parents.

Some time later, I received wonderful news. Having finally laid down the burden he had been carrying alone, their son was searching for a new job with renewed hope, supported by the encouragement of his relatives. Rather than remaining trapped in his feelings of anger and despair—the four evil states of existence: hells, hungry spirits, beasts, and asuras—he accepted the reality before him and found the courage to take his first step toward a new future. This transformation was made possible by something most powerful: the radiant bond between parent and child, woven together by the parents' deep love for their son and the son's love for his parents.

It is precisely when we face circumstances beyond our control that we can discover true kindness and strength. I sincerely hope to continue strongly supporting the parents, who are bound to their son by this precious bond, and to share the wisdom needed to overcome suffering together with everyone in our community.



Germinating the Seeds of Awakening

Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

Cultivate Toughness Born of a Compassionate Heart

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



Founder Niwano attending the National Memorial Service for the War Dead at the Nippon Budokan on August 15, 1989.

Shakyamuni Admonishes Rahula

Our discussion of cultivating toughness born of a compassionate heart brings to mind the principle of “the two methods of discipline and love.” This is the theory that in nurturing and guiding others, one must combine both firmness and kindness.

The Buddha’s method of guiding people is a perfect example of this principle. Although he concealed great compassion deep within his heart, there could be a sternness to his actual guidance. The following incident is one such example.

This incident took place when Rahula, who was both the Buddha’s son and his disciple, was a boy. Rahula was practicing at the Hot Spring Monastery outside the City of Royal Palaces. Lay followers, wishing to see the Buddha, would ask Rahula, “Where is the World-Honored One now?” and just for the fun of it, he would answer “He is at the Bamboo Grove Monastery,” when



in fact, the Buddha was staying on Divine Eagle Peak. And when the Buddha was at the Bamboo Grove Monastery, Rahula would say, “It seems he is on Divine Eagle Peak.” Since the two places were some 8 kilometers apart (about 5 miles), the people would make the trip in vain, becoming utterly exhausted, and end up unable to see the Buddha at all.

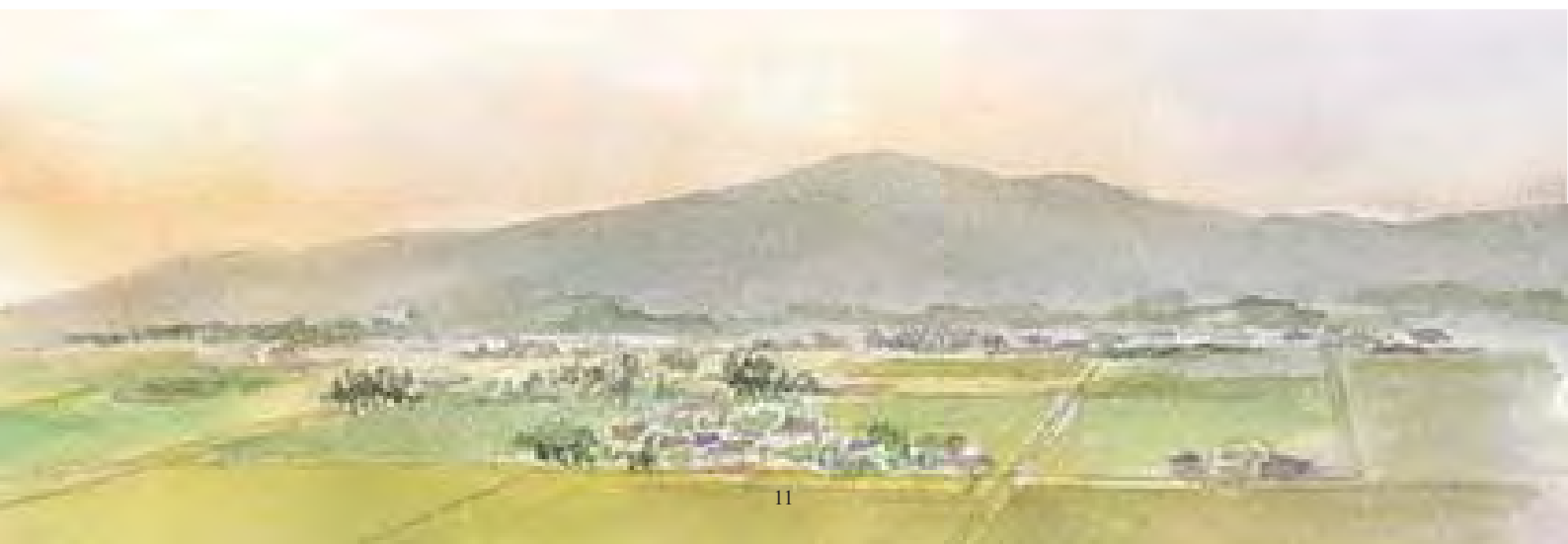
As soon as Shakyamuni heard about this, he set out for the Hot Spring Monastery, where Rahula was staying, to admonish him as follows. When he arrived, Shakyamuni instructed Rahula, “Bring a basin filled with water.” After washing his feet in the basin, Shakyamuni asked, “Rahula, do you think this water is fit to drink?” Rahula replied, “Water used to wash one’s feet is unfit to drink.” “That is so,” the Buddha said. “Although the water was originally pure, once it has become like this, it is no longer fit to drink. In the same way, though you have left your home life to enter the pure path, if you fail to devote yourself to the Way, and instead of cultivating your mind you tell lies, cause trouble for people, and enjoy doing so, then you are just like this water.”

Next, the Buddha threw the water out and asked, “Could this basin now be used to hold food and drink?” “No,” Rahula replied. “Since it has been filled with dirty water, it cannot be used for food and drink.” “That is so,” the Buddha said. “Your present state of mind is also just like this basin.” Then he kicked the basin with his foot. It rolled away with a clatter, bouncing several times before coming to a stop.

Shakyamuni then asked, “Were you concerned that this basin might break?” Rahula replied, “No. It is a cheap basin, so we would not be troubled if it broke.” The Buddha then admonished him, saying, “In the same way, if you continue using your words to toy with people and cause them distress, you will become a person who is neither loved nor missed when you are gone.”

Rahula took this stern warning deeply to heart. Thereafter, he devoted himself to practice with such diligence that it was as though he had been reborn. Accumulating virtue without drawing any attention to himself, Rahula came to be recognized as “foremost in ‘unseen practices’” and became one of the Buddha’s Ten Great Disciples.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 103–105





What Those Tears Taught Me

Rev. Takashi Maeda
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. The experience that first led me to faith took place when I joined a volunteer activity during my second year of high school. Together with members of the Rissho Kosei-kai sangha, I visited the home of a woman who had lost both her husband and her right leg during the war. We helped build a kitchen shelf for her.

When our work was finished, and we were about to leave, she came outside on her crutches to see us off. We said, "Thank you very much," and started riding away on our bicycles. Just then, I heard a loud thud behind us. When I turned around, I saw her sitting on the ground, waving to us with tears streaming down her face.

As a high school student, I was deeply moved by that sight. I realized that even a small act of kindness could bring such profound joy to another person. The experience touched my heart in a way I have never forgotten. To this day, that scene remains vivid in my memory as the starting point of my faith and continues to inspire my activities.

In this month's message, President Niwano teaches us that people possess a desire to find happiness with others, not merely by themselves. The light we kindle for others not only brightens their hearts but also warms our own. Acts of giving and volunteer service are certainly examples of this, but in our daily lives, so are kind words and thoughtful gestures. Each one is a small light.

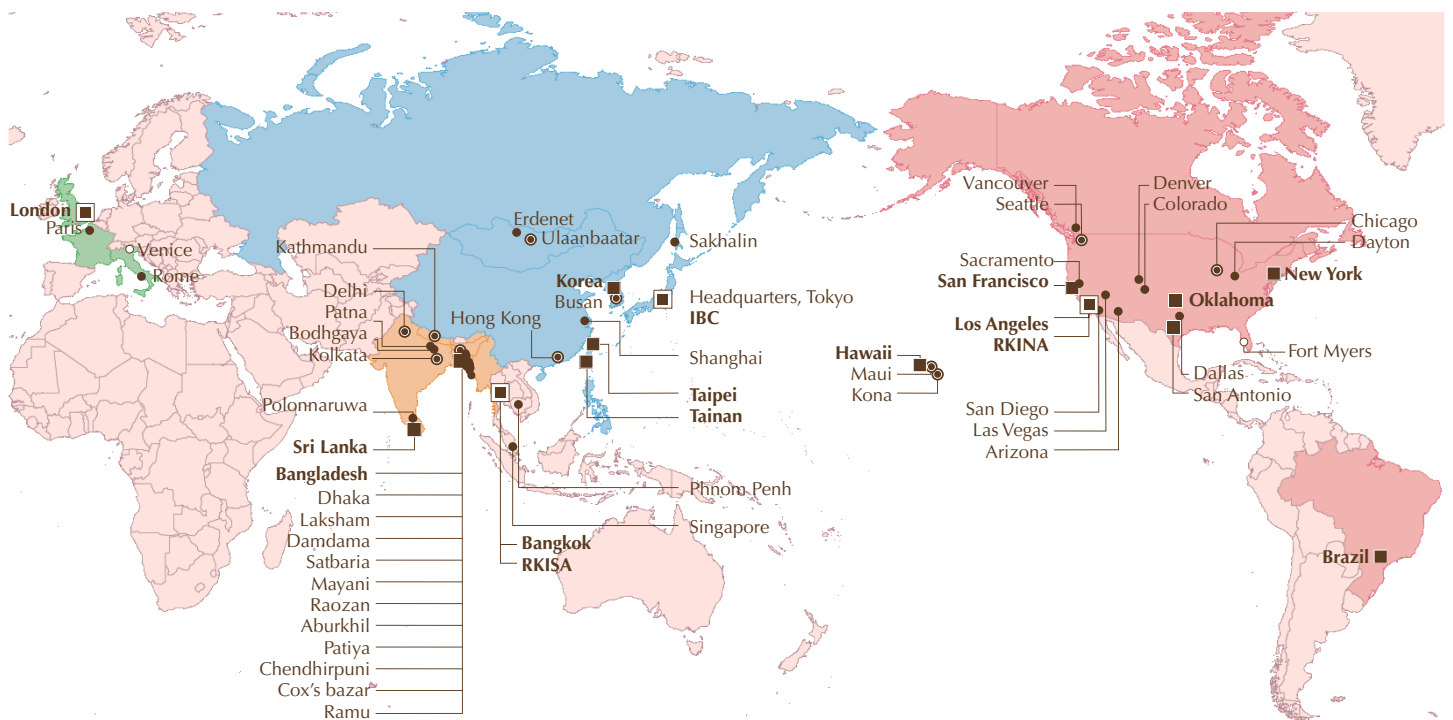
As we cherish the compassionate heart of a bodhisattva, may we continue to light these small flames for those around us. I believe that, little by little, these acts of kindness bring happiness to others while also becoming a source of joy and fulfillment in our own lives.



Members of Rissho Kosei-kai International welcome Ms. Yoko Phillips of Rissho Kosei-kai of the UK at their office in Tokyo on June 1 (Front row, left: Ms. Phillips; front row, center: Rev. Maeda).



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