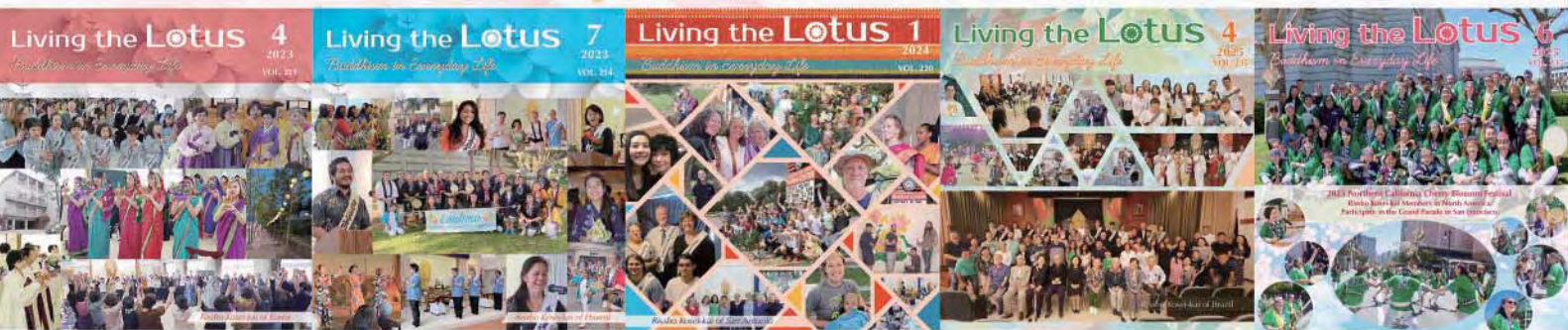


Living the Lotus 10

Buddhism in Everyday Life

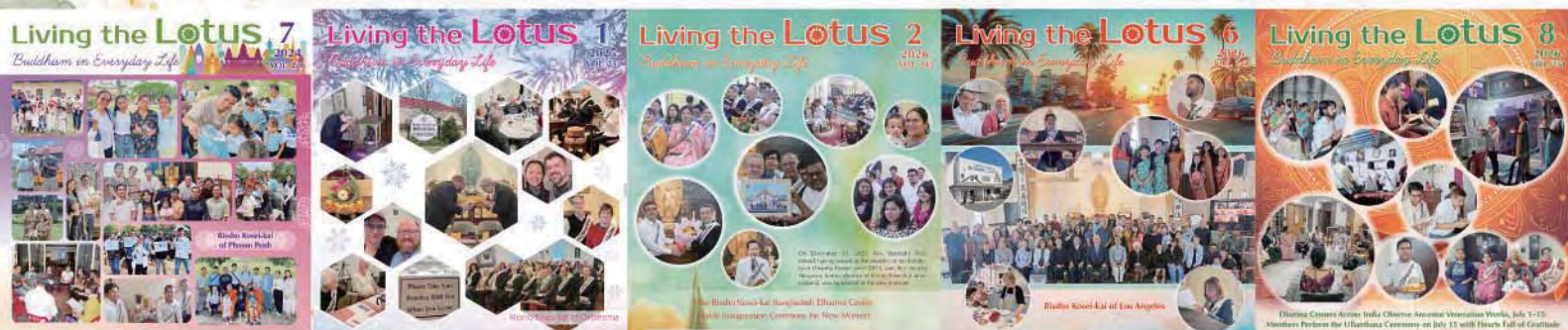
2026
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Thank you for reading *Living the Lotus* every month. Thanks to your support, *Living the Lotus* is celebrating its 21st anniversary this month. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported us in so many ways.

In conjunction with the recent redesign of the Rissho Kosei-kai English website, *Living the Lotus* will transition from its current PDF newsletter format to a new web magazine format starting in November. This month's issue will be the final PDF edition, but *Living the Lotus* will continue to bring you the President's Message and a variety of articles on how to apply Buddhism to daily life.

We hope you will continue to enjoy *Living the Lotus* by visiting the page on our website.



Living the Lotus Vol. 253 (October 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.

We Live and Die as Part of the Wondrous Dharma Part 1

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



Overcoming Death

In one of Founder Nikkyo Niwano's Dharma talks, in which he discussed people dying and the Buddhist view of human life and death, he said that "The most essential thing in Buddhist practice is 'liberation from birth, aging, illness, and death.'" Since death is the most significant event in life, one of the essential points of the Buddha Way is certainly "liberation from" (that is, overcoming) anxiety, fear, and suffering related to wondering what happens to us after we die, being scared of dying, and wanting not to die. By overcoming them, you can attain peace of mind and, at the same time, refine your mind and body with prayers for the happiness of yourself and others, which is diligent practice of the Buddha Way.

Regarding my understanding of how we should live and face death—a key element of the Buddha Way—I have previously mentioned such things as when we die, we go home to the one great life force, and that regarding life itself, drawing on the writings of the theoretical physicist Haruo Saji, my view is that our lives are as one with the universe, and therefore ultimately, in every moment of every day, we are living as part of eternity.

When we view life from the perspective of the universe—a view that resonates with the teachings of the Lotus Sutra—we realize that we are all living as part of the eternal life force that stretches from the dawn of the universe into the distant future. I think that when we embrace this perspective, we no longer fear death, and the sadness and anxiety associated with it are alleviated.

The poet Kenji Miyazawa is believed to have overcome the suffering of living and dying and to have faced death realistically through his faith in the Lotus Sutra, which expounds that the life of the Buddha is eternal. In a poem beginning with the lines “Soon I will die / Perhaps today or tomorrow,” Kenji lays bare his state of mind: “When I die, I will return to the vacuum, / I will once again perceive myself / . . . / And this basic, original teaching has a name: the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma” (*Miyazawa Kenji zenshu* [The complete works of Kenji Miyazawa], vol. 2, Chikuma Shobo, 1986). He believed that after death, he would return to the one great life force, the universe, and eventually receive life again, as manifested in the Lotus Sutra.

Through his understanding of the Lotus Sutra, Kenji realizes that he himself is living some part of the eternal life of the universe and finds liberation from the suffering caused by his illness, and so he goes on to write: “Birth is also a Wondrous Dharma birth, / And death is also a Wondrous Dharma death.” In other words, he was able to accept both his own life (his birth), which was marked by sickness, as well as the death drawing near him, for exactly what they were: workings of the Wondrous Dharma, the Truth.

We Are All Living the Eternal Life of the Universe

Kenji Miyazawa wrote the poem quoted above, titled “February 1929,” about four years before his death, when he was thirty-three. Rarely does someone of such a young age possess such perspective on the meaning of life and death. Undoubtedly, the teachings of the Lotus Sutra provided the foundation for his insight.

No one knows where we go or what happens to us after we die. Even so, we find peace of mind in learning that the lives we are living, both now and after death, are part of the eternal life of the universe. The joy Kenji felt upon encountering the Lotus Sutra and discovering this fact is surely something that we who share the same faith can also say we experience, can't we?

As for me, I still hold the same sentiment I expressed before. Having seen with my own eyes how Founder Nikkyo Niwano peacefully returned to the hometown of all human life, I gained the ability to calmly accept death, thinking to myself, “Hmmm, when my time comes, I hope that I will be able to die like that.” I attribute this perspective to the blessings of faith and the vast body of wisdom about human life that has been passed down by our predecessors.

That said, death makes no distinctions; it comes to everyone. There may be no such thing as a death that one can accept gladly with complete peace of mind. That is precisely why “liberation from birth, aging, illness, and death” becomes one of life's major themes. Furthermore, because everyone must eventually face death, the greatest happiness is found in savoring the joy of being alive right now and living in the present moment in harmony with others.

As for why our present lives form part of the unbroken stream of the eternal life force that has flowed since the origin of the universe, and why we are currently living our lives while enduring the sufferings of birth, aging, illness, and death—these are questions I would like to further reflect upon.



Taking the Bodhisattva Regard of the Sounds of the World as My Ideal, I Will Strive with a Compassionate Heart

Mr. Priya Ranjan Barua, Bangladesh Dharma Center

When and how did you encounter the teachings of Risshō Kōsei-kai?

I was born and raised in a family that practiced Theravada Buddhism, and because two of my uncles were Theravada Buddhist monks, I grew up with a deep faith in the Buddha. After graduating from university, I began working as a government employee in Chittagong, where my family home was located, but I was eventually transferred to Sylhet, about four hundred kilometers away. Sylhet is a city that developed as a center of Islamic culture, and there were only a few Buddhist temples scattered throughout the city. Before long, I came to have fewer opportunities to visit temples and learn about the Buddha's teachings.

Then, one day in 2000, I met my friend Biblob Barua and my relative Ashim Barua. It was then that I first learned about Risshō Kōsei-kai, a lay Buddhist organization, that had a liaison office in Chittagong. They also introduced me to Biman Kumar Barua, who was serving as the leader of the liaison office at the time.

Thanks to their kind encouragement, I began making frequent trips from my workplace in Sylhet all the way to Chittagong. I started participating in sutra recitation services and *hoza*, or "Dharma circle," held every Friday.

Although both Theravada Buddhism and Risshō Kōsei-kai are rooted in the Buddha's teachings, there are differences in their approaches to Buddhist practice. In Theravada Buddhism, monks generally recite the sutras in Pali and give Dharma talks. Lay followers, on the other hand, often focus on ritual practices such as paying homage to the Buddha, chanting sutras, and making offerings. Because they do not understand Pali, laypeople may find it difficult to fully absorb the Buddha's teachings.



Mr. Priya Ranjan Barua

In Risshō Kōsei-kai, however, members themselves recite the Lotus Sutra together in Bengali, and they discuss the Buddha's teachings and learn from one another about them.

What impressed me most deeply was seeing Risshō Kōsei-kai members, as lay Buddhists, practice the bodhisattva way by cherishing their families and work while sharing the Buddha's teachings for the happiness and peace of others. This fresh and moving experience touched my heart deeply and made me feel strongly that *I, too, want to walk this path*. It was after this that I joined Risshō Kōsei-kai.

Meeting your friend and relative was a major turning point in your faith, wasn't it?

Yes, absolutely. It was because I met them that I was able to encounter Risshō Kōsei-kai and the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. By putting those teachings into

Interview

practice in my daily life, I have received many merits and found great spiritual support. I believe that meeting those two people was an invaluable karmic connection that opened up a new horizon in my life.

When I first visited Rissho Kosei-kai, Rev. Kazumasa Iizawa, former minister of the Oita Dharma Center, was visiting Bangladesh from Japan to share the Dharma. He had been sowing the seeds of the Dharma in Bangladesh for many years, and I was able to hear many valuable stories from him. I was particularly interested when he spoke about how Rissho Kosei-kai members practice the bodhisattva way every day for the happiness of others. From then on, I traveled from Sylhet, where I was working, every Friday to the Rissho Kosei-kai liaison office in Chittagong and participated in sutra recitation services and hoza together with members of the sangha. Later, because I wanted to share the wonderful teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai with many people in Sylhet, I began inviting friends and acquaintances to sutra recitation



Mr. Priya Ranjan serves as the MC for the sutra recitation service held every Friday at the Dharma center.

services and hoza. As a result, thanks to the sangha members' support, I was able to connect twenty-five households with the Dharma.

As you have studied the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, what has left the strongest impression on you?

The Lotus Sutra features many bodhisattvas, including Manjusri, Maitreya, and Never Unworthy of Respect. Each of these bodhisattvas has wonderful virtues and a particular role, and I believe they each show us an example of how we should aspire to live.

Among them, I am particularly drawn to the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World, the embodiment of compassion. I look up to the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World and view this bodhisattva as a great ideal to strive toward.

Chapter 25 of the Lotus Sutra, "The Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World as Universal Gateway," states that the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World manifests her thirty-three embodiments to expound the Dharma. This means that the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World manifests in various forms in order to liberate people, showing them a path to liberation according to their individual circumstances. This is an expression of the workings of compassion.

Taking the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Sounds of the World as my ideal, I would like to continue striving so that, with compassion in my heart, I can be there for people who are suffering and in distress, even if only in a small way.

Is there a particular teaching of Rissho Kosei-kai that you keep close to your heart?

I like the expression "Putting others first," and I try to put it into practice in my daily life. I believe that "Putting others first" expresses the essence of the bodhisattva way taught in the Lotus Sutra and is itself the practice of the bodhisattva way. At the Dharma center, we are taught that a bodhisattva is someone who seeks enlightenment while at the same time

taking action for the happiness of others and walking a path toward happiness for both oneself and others. When we look at society today, however, there are many people who think and act primarily for themselves and live according to their own interests. That is very unfortunate. But precisely because of this, I believe that when we make “Putting others first” our guiding principle and take action wishing for the happiness of others, we discover true joy and a sense of purpose in our lives.

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

Among the various practices of Rissho Kosei-kai, I am particularly drawn to ancestor appreciation, hoza, and the Donate-a-Meal Movement. Through sutra recitations we express our gratitude to the Buddha and our ancestors. Through hoza, we can talk and learn the Dharma together with other members of the sangha and share our experiences and the merits we have received through our faith. The Donate-a-Meal Movement is also a concrete practice of the bodhisattva way based on the Buddhist spirit of “empathy, prayer, and donation.” Several times a month, we voluntarily go without one meal, experi-

ence hunger, pray for the happiness of people around the world who are suffering from poverty, illness, and other hardships, and make a monetary offering. For me, this is also a peace movement that is highly relevant to the world today.

Finally, could you tell us about your goals for your Buddhist practice and your dreams for the future?

Rissho Kosei-kai’s Members’ Vow, which we recite regularly, clearly sets forth our purpose and guiding principles for Buddhist practice: “we vow to perfect ourselves” and “we pledge ourselves to follow the bodhisattva way to bring peace to our families, communities, and countries, and to the world.”

Therefore, I would like to continue practicing and striving every day in accordance with the Members’ Vow, without ever changing my commitment to it.

As for my dreams for the future, I will reach retirement age in three years. I would like to regard the beginning of my second life as a new starting point and devote myself wholeheartedly to sharing and transmitting the Dharma and practicing the bodhisattva way for the happiness of others. I hope to live a fulfilling and meaningful life.



Mr. Priya Ranjan (second from left on the far side) participates in hoza at the Bangladesh Dharma Center.

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



Practicing the Truth of the Path

Last month we considered the Truth of the Cause of suffering, or second Noble Truth. This time, we'll explore the Truth of the Path to the extinguishment of suffering, usually considered the fourth and final Noble Truth. We'll take up the Truth of the Path next because, from the practical standpoint of everyday life, once we begin to understand the causes of our anxiety and distress, our next task is to identify the steps and practices we can pursue to free ourselves from that suffering.

In September, I shared a simple example of suffering—the distress of things not going as I wished when I was caught in a traffic jam. Through the practice of the Truth of the Cause, I investigated that suffering's chain of causation.

The steps I can take to free myself from such suffering—the practice of the path—are, just like suffering's causation, multilayered. The most obvious thing I can do is to stop acting out of anger toward other people. The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings provides important guidance: I need to undertake practices that “make one who is angry [me!] aspire to forbearance” (*The Threefold Lotus Sutra* 23). If I can catch myself when I am about to act out, I should be able to stop such angry outbursts. Holding back expressions of anger and frustration could prevent conflicts with others and thus spare me and those around me much trouble.

But in the long term, if I do not deal with those feelings and just continually suppress them, they may become stronger and eventually explode with even more ferocity. In other words, this kind of self-control, while helpful and at times necessary, is at best like applying first aid, and not the bodhisattva's forbear-

ance in a real sense. As Founder Niwano observed, when we force ourselves to “bite the bullet” and suppress anger and resentment, “we are still novices” (*Buddhism for Today* 220).

Chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra tells us that forbearance comes along with two things: compassion for everyone and realizing the equality of all things. If I can expand my capacity for compassion and see people through the eyes of equality, then when caught in a traffic jam or similarly inconvenient situations, I will naturally empathize with those who are stuck along with me rather than seeing them as my enemies.

What are some examples of concrete practices to nurture compassion and equanimity? I can develop both by following the Closing Sutra's instructions to “look upon all people as though they were buddhas, and living beings as if they were [my] parents” (*The Threefold Lotus Sutra* 390). Praying for others by including many suffering people in my transfer of merit at the end of daily sutra recitation, wishing for their happiness and an end to their suffering, is another way of cultivating compassion. Transferring this wish into concrete action by doing things for the benefit of others, which is usually considered the practice of generosity, can also help nurture compassion and equanimity by fostering a feeling of oneness with others.

These practices are part of the bodhisattva path and necessary antidotes to anger, but I must not get too focussed on eliminating it because such a preoccupation can keep me in a cycle of reactivity with that anger. As Founder Niwano cautions, “As long as we are fixated on our delusions, thinking ‘I want to be

free from my delusions, I want to be free from them,’ our minds remain caught on the idea of delusion, making it impossible to free ourselves from them” (*Shinshaku hokke sanbukyo* 1:307).

Furthermore, looking at my anger as a kind of enemy that I want to eliminate will prevent me from seeing the compassion already present within the anger itself—discovering the realm of bodhisattvas within the realm of hells. My anger, while unskillful, is at the same time a dimension of compassion for myself, as it arises from my deepest wish to avoid the kind of suffering that I incurred as a child for my tardiness. Recognizing and affirming this deepest wish can help heal the old wound underlying my anger.

Going one step further, I found that I also needed to discover the compassion (realm of bodhisattvas) within the anger (realm of hells) of those who harshly reprimanded me for many things, including my tardiness. At heart, they were concerned with my happi-

ness, even if because of their own suffering, they were decidedly unskillful in trying to guide me. This is forgiveness from a Buddhist perspective.

Practicing the Truth of the Path entails embracing an ecology of practices that deal with the causes of suffering in multiple ways. If I am mindful in daily life, I can stop outbursts of anger when they are about to erupt. But beyond this kind of stopgap measure, I must also undertake practices that work as antidotes to anger to gradually overcome it by increasing my capacity for compassion and equanimity. Finally, I can look deeply into my anger to discover the bodhisattva aspiration within it, which is a way of embracing the anger as my “good friend”—my own personal Devadatta. Instead of suppressing my anger or opposing it, this approach transforms it by revealing the compassion that is its original nature, buddha nature.

Next time, we’ll conclude by considering the Truth of Extinguishment from the perspective of practicing the Dharma in the here and now.





Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

Aspiring to Be Like the Buddha

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



Aspiring to Be Like the Buddha

We members of Rissho Kosei-kai receive and embrace the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, and little by little, we engage in bodhisattva practice. This means, even if only one step at a time, we are walking the Buddha Way, the path to becoming a buddha.

Of course, “becoming a buddha” is no simple matter. However, rather than considering it especially difficult, I believe it is better to think about the Buddha Way in terms that make it easier, even if only a little, to put into practice.

The original meaning of the word “buddha” is “one who is awakened.” To be awakened means perceiving everything that arises in this world, including the workings of our own minds, with completely clear, unclouded vision, exactly as it really is.

In contrast with this, we are not capable of seeing things as they really are, nor can we always



maintain the proper state of mind required. That is why striving to become “one who is awakened” by following Shakyamuni’s teachings constitutes bodhisattva practice and is the Buddha Way.

Incidentally, in chapter 2, “Skillful Means,” of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha declares, “You should know, Shariputra, / That from the beginning I made a vow, / Desiring all living beings / To be my equals, with no distinctions between us.”

The Buddha is saying that he wishes all people to attain, just as he has, a state in which they are imbued with unclouded wisdom and compassion.

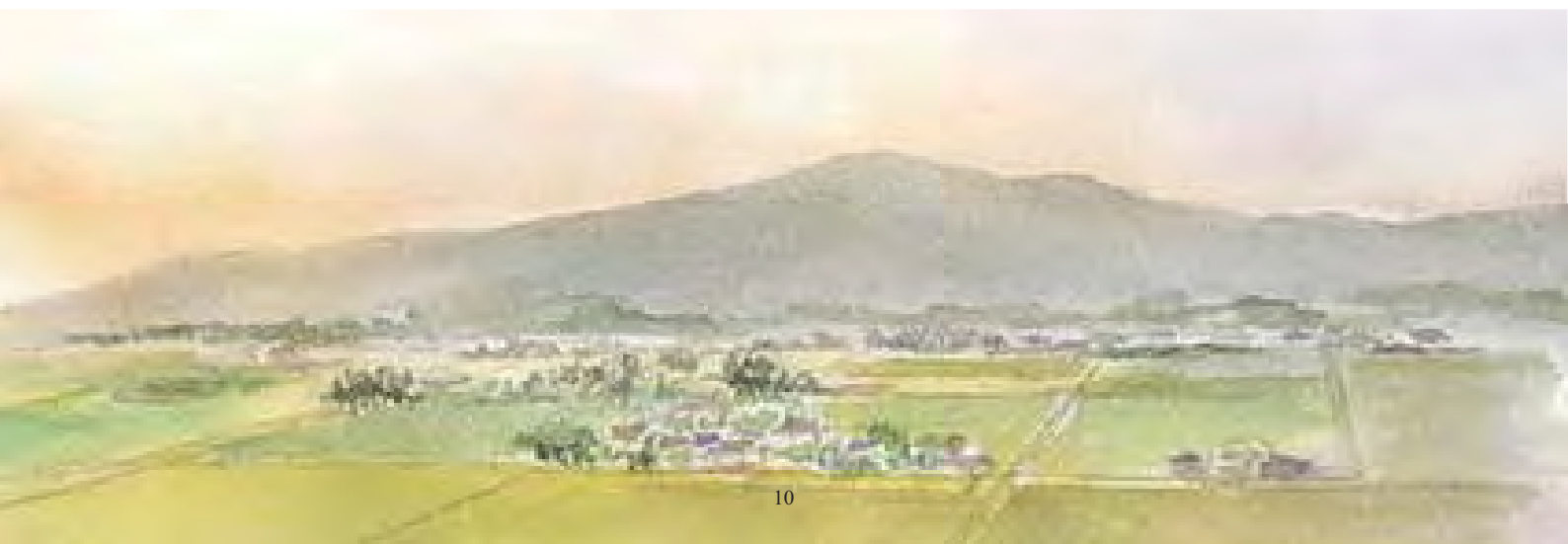
What should we make of the Buddha’s original vow? On hearing the words, I suspect that many people would dismiss them outright, thinking, “Even if you say so, there’s just no way I could ever become like the Buddha.” Still, in my case, I humbly accept the Buddha’s words, saying to myself, “Because the Buddha reaches out to me with this guarantee, I too should surely be able to become ‘one who is awakened.’” Having such hope and a heart of gratitude allows me to live life very joyfully without losing my way.

We tend to think of our existence as limited to this life, so we relentlessly pursue nothing but immediate gratification. Yet no matter how materially affluent we may become, no one can escape the “four sufferings” of birth, aging, illness, and death. Additionally, we inevitably experience emotional distress, including the suffering of having to part with those we love and the suffering of having to encounter people and things we dislike.

But our existence is not limited to this life. So, if we engage in bodhisattva practice even a little during our lives in this world, then through the merits of that practice, whenever we are reborn, we will gradually free ourselves from attachment to our own happiness and develop a broader heart that is able to consider the happiness of the people around us.

Ultimately, Shakyamuni’s vow, “Desiring all living beings / To be my equals, with no distinctions between us,” is nothing less than his guarantee that each and every one of us has the innate potential to reach the same state of awakening as the Buddha.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 108–110





Embracing the Four Sufferings to Live in the Present

Rev. Takashi Maeda
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. Buddhism teaches that life entails four kinds of suffering: birth, aging, illness, and death. Founder Nikkyo Niwano taught us that “the most essential thing in Buddhist practice is ‘liberation from birth, aging, illness, and death.’”

What, then, does it mean to be liberated from them? I believe it does not mean eliminating suffering but discovering how to live a life in which these four sufferings are inevitable.

The suffering of birth means living a life that will not always unfold as we wish. Yet it is because we were born that we can meet many different people and form countless precious connections. To live is also to journey through these encounters and connections.

The suffering of aging is the gradual decline of the body. Yet as we grow older, we gain experience and become better able to understand the pain of others.

Illness, too, can bring great pain and hardship. However, it is sometimes through illness that we come to appreciate the blessing of good health and recognize how much we are supported by those around us.

Finally, there is the suffering of death. Every life must one day come to an end. It is precisely because we will someday die that we cherish each day we are given.

We cannot eliminate the four sufferings. Through them, however, we can awaken to the preciousness of life and learn to treasure our connections with others. Seen in this light, the four sufferings may not be “four walls” that make life painful, but “four gateways” through which we can live more deeply.

I believe that liberation from birth, aging, illness, and death does not mean seeking a life free from suffering but rather discovering meaning even in suffering and living each moment to the fullest.



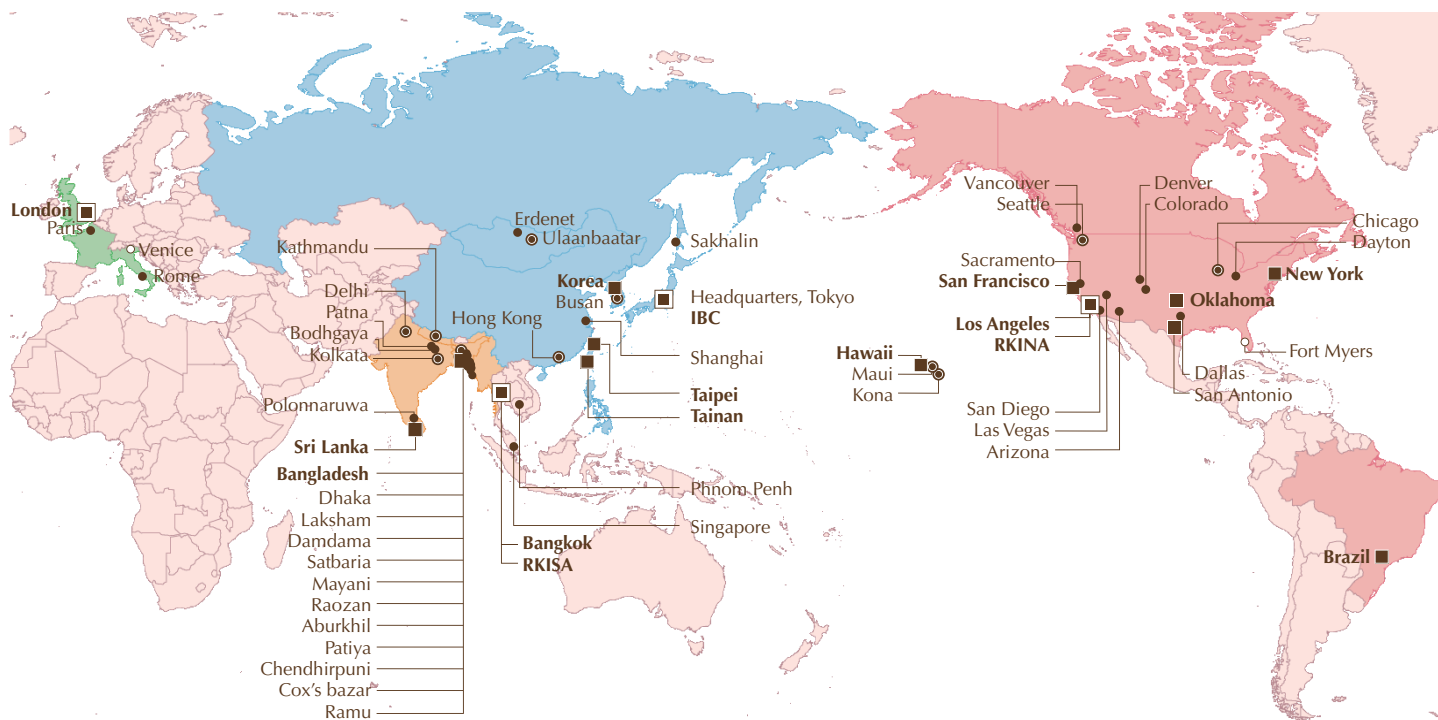
Internationally renowned guitarist Dr. Martin Taylor and his wife visit the Rissho Kosei-kai International office on August 12. Dr. and Mrs. Taylor live in Scotland and are members of Rissho Kosei-kai of the UK. Rev. Maeda is on the far right in the front row.

Rissho Kosei-kai International

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