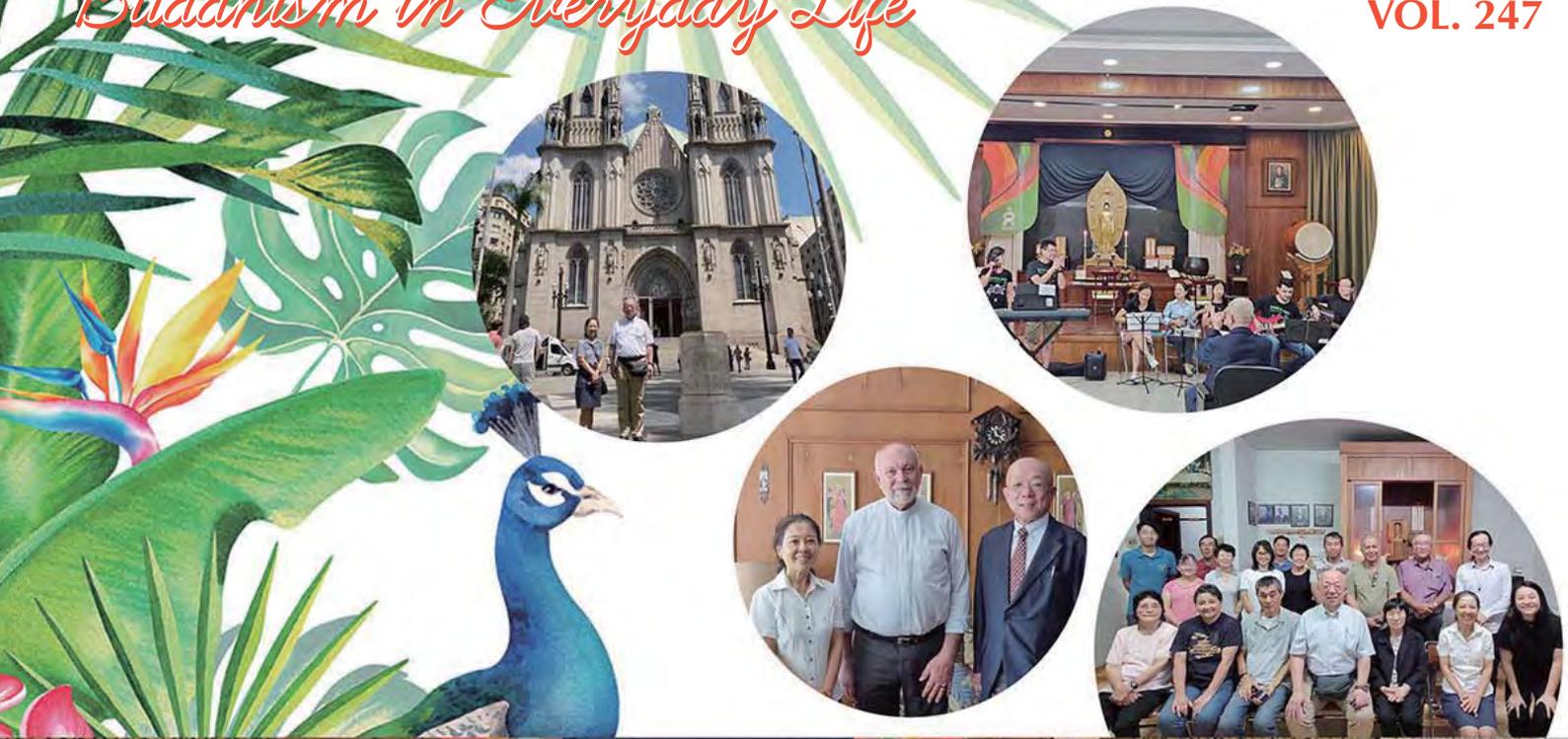


Living the Lotus 4

Buddhism in Everyday Life

2026
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The Brazil Dharma Center Welcomes Rev. Takashi Maeda, Director of Rissho Kosei-kai International, on March 22

Living the Lotus Vol. 247 (April 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.

A Person as Small as a Violet

Rev. Nichiko Niwano
President of Rissho Kosei-kai



Soseki's Poem and Shakyamuni's Birth Declaration

In 1897, the novelist Soseki Natsume sent his close friend, Shiki Masaoka, this haiku: “Born as small as a violet, / Such a humble person.” Although written not long after Japan’s victory in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), amid an air of elation as the country moved toward becoming a modern nation, this poem seems to exude a sentiment akin to sadness on Soseki’s part.

It is important for people to value their own individuality and live with pride. Misunderstanding this, though, can lead to arrogance—such as being overly proud of yourself or intimidating other people—and at times, even spread the dangerous mood among people everywhere that war is acceptable. Faced with that reality, I feel that Soseki’s poem is imbued with the wish to be like a roadside violet that blooms quietly, lives vigorously but inconspicuously, and is a presence that comforts and soothes the minds of those who happen to see it.

The ceremony celebrating the birth of Shakyamuni will take place on April 8, when we again reflect upon the meaning of his birth declaration, “I alone am honored, in heaven and on earth,” which he is said to have uttered shortly after his birth. This declaration can be interpreted as teaching us the importance of the humility and introspection that comport with the sentiments of Soseki’s poem, as well as true respect for oneself and others.

Each and every person has a life that is precious and unique in this world. When we realize this, we understand how foolish it is to feverishly pursue wild ambitions or argue and fight with others. At the same time, by respecting oneself and others—in other words, living in harmony with everyone—we come to better understand the meaning of being born as a human being and why we are taught that the mind of gratitude and compassion is more important than anything else.

Instead of trying to be “big shots” and lead a self-satisfied lifestyle, we will be much happier if, for instance, we bring peace to the minds of other people and build harmony around us, even if we might be unassuming, “small persons.”

The Meaning of Having Been Born

Soseki chose the violet, but what kind of flower would you choose to be like?

In this season, magnolias, cherry blossoms, and dandelions are lovely, and daphne bushes are appreciated for their soothing fragrance. Someone once stated that “there is no ranking the beauty of flowers,” and surely there are no distinctions, such as superior, inferior, pretty, or ugly, that apply to the way every kind of flower does its part to bloom as best it can.

The philosopher Kitaro Nishida (1870–1945) aptly said, “Just as flowers are most beautiful when they reveal their true nature, human beings reach the pinnacle of their beauty when they reveal their true nature.”

For those of us who study and live by the Buddha’s teachings, true human nature is none other than buddha nature, and when we all realize this and manifest our buddha nature, our lives will become like those of flowers, and we will be doing our part as best we can. Therein lies the great meaning of having been born as human beings.

However, the time at which we become aware of the meaning of life varies from person to person, and young people in particular should not be impatient or pessimistic.

To quote one of my favorite Buddhist poems: “In this world, / Live however you can, / Just stay true to focusing your mind on goodness” (Sazen Sekkei).

This poem means that you should put your mind at ease; reduce your desires, worries, and anger; and always be true to yourself.

We should maintain this attitude and never forget to put others first, especially in an era of growing anxiety and discontent. This will allow all of us to bloom splendidly as unique individuals.

From *Kosei*, April 2026



I Want to Share the Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion with Many People

Mr. Nicola Tini, Rissho Kosei-kai of Rome, Italy

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

I was born in Rome in 1972, and until I was about eighteen, I had absolutely no interest in religion. However, while studying at university, I took a class on Eastern spirituality, and I learned about Buddhism in India, China, and Japan. That was the first time I heard about the Buddha. Initially, I had the impression that he was like the Christian God, but later I realized that my understanding had been completely wrong. Since then, I have developed a strong interest in Buddhism. As I read various Buddhist texts, I learned that a great Buddhist monk named Nichiren existed in thirteenth-century Japan. I discovered that Nichiren dedicated his entire life to spreading the teachings of the Lotus Sutra with an indomitable spirit, and I became completely fascinated by the Lotus Sutra.

Later, I found an English-language book titled *Rissho Kosei-kai* (Kosei Publishing Company, 1966) in the library of the Japanese Cultural Institute in Rome. The book contained explanations about the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, the organization's history, its main scripture the Threefold Lotus Sutra, the newly completed Great Sacred Hall, the focus of devotion, *hoza* or "Dharma circle," and the Oeshiki Festival. It also included a photograph of Founder Nikkyo Niwano having an audience with His Holiness Pope Paul VI during the Second Vatican Council. Deeply moved by the content of that book, I immediately wrote a letter to the Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters in Japan, whose address was listed at the end of the book. About two weeks later, I received a reply, and I read the letter with great emotion and joy. It contained the name and phone number of a Rissho Kosei-kai member who was studying at a



Mr. Nicola Tini

university in Rome. That person was Rev. Koichi Kawamoto, who is now the minister of the Sugunami Dharma Center and concurrently serves as the director of the Tokyo area. I believe that was around 1992.

So, that one book led you to the Buddha's teachings, didn't it?

After that, Rev. Kawamoto kindly visited my home many times. He explained Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra, and the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai with enthusiasm and in an easy-to-understand way not only to me but also to my family and friends. A small but wonderful sangha was born in Rome. Rev. Kawamoto was a very important leader for us, and someone we could truly rely on. However, when his study in Rome ended, he had to return to Japan for a new mission. As I was young, in my twenties at the time, I worried about how I should practice and proceed in Rome, where there was no leader. Then, at some point, I resolved to become a monk. From 1998, I devoted myself to religious austerities as a lay monk, and the following year, I formally received ordina-

Interview

tion. However, after training as a monk for four years, I firmly resolved as follows: *It is important for me to practice as a lay practitioner. I want to study and practice the Lotus Sutra diligently in the lay Buddhist sangha of Rissho Kosei-kai.* In 2003, I returned to lay life and decided to continue my practice as a member of Rissho Kosei-kai. Ten years later, in 2013, the Rome Center of Rissho Kosei-kai opened and Rev. Katsutoshi Mizumo (currently the minister of the Hamakita Dharma Center) was appointed as its director, marking the start of our new practice.

Last October, you visited Japan to attend a translation meeting at Rissho Kosei-kai International. Which of Rissho Kosei-kai’s publications are you currently translating?

After the Rome Center opened, I soon began to translate the English version of *The Threefold Lotus Sutra* into Italian. Simultaneously, I began working on Founder Niwano’s commentary on the Threefold Lotus Sutra in ten volumes and *Buddhism for Today* as well as President Nichiko Niwano’s *Cultivating the Buddhist Heart*. I have also been translating the Founder’s essays and the President’s monthly messages for *Living the Lotus*. However, translation work requires extreme concentration and patience, which often caused me to feel intense stress. I have also experienced a struggle with loneliness. During these



Mr. Tini and a member of the Rome hoza (left) during their visit to the headquarters in Tokyo in October 2025. At right is Rev. Koichi Kawamoto, director of the Tokyo area.



Mr. Tini (back row, center) with members of the Hamakita Dharma Center who participated in the Founder’s Birthplace Festival on October 12, 2025.

times, staff members of Rissho Kosei-kai International encouraged and supported me through emails and online hoza, enabling me to overcome these hardships. This year, thanks to their long-term support and cooperation, our long-awaited Italian translation of *The Threefold Lotus Sutra* will finally be published. Furthermore, we are grateful that President Niwano will kindly contribute a foreword.

The Lotus Sutra contains many difficult terms, and we imagine translating its profound teachings must have presented considerable challenges. What points did you particularly keep in mind?

I carefully selected the most appropriate Italian expressions to ensure that the meaning of each and every word was conveyed accurately and completely. The same applies to translating any type of text, but especially to translating *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*. Furthermore, I carefully reviewed expressions prone to misunderstanding and selected words and phrases with great care. Above all, since the book is not intended for scholars, I strove to produce a translation that uses the plainest possible language so that it is easy for the general public, not just Rissho Kosei-kai members, to understand. I aimed for a translation that allows the Lotus Sutra to be practiced as a “living teaching” in daily life. Staff members of Rissho

Kosei-kai International and I had numerous discussions to ensure that the translation aligns with the true intent of the Buddha and the heart of Founder Niwano. For me, the process of translation feels like a magnificent journey through the Lotus Sutra.

You had a variety of experiences during your stay in Japan, didn't you?

The translation meeting was certainly a major purpose of my visit, but the various experiences I had over approximately three weeks in Japan feel like a precious pilgrimage, which I will never forget. During my stay, I visited Minobusan Kuonji in Yamanashi Prefecture, which is the grand head temple of Nichiren Shu. I also experienced an overnight stay at the Hamakita Dharma Center in Shizuoka Prefecture; participated in the Founder's Birthplace Festival in Tokamachi City, Niigata Prefecture; and engaged in *tedori*, or "enhancing people's connection with the Dharma," *hoza*, and memorial services at the Suginami Dharma Center back in Tokyo. I am truly grateful to have concluded my pilgrimage by joining the procession of the headquarters' Oeshiki Ichijo Festival with members of the Suginami Dharma Center. I intend to share what I learned from the Dharma practice at the headquarters, and my encounters with Japanese members, with the sangha in Italy.

Could you share a passage or teaching from the Lotus Sutra that you keep in mind?

Every chapter of the Lotus Sutra is wonderful, and there are many deeply inspiring passages. However, the one I have recently etched most deeply in my heart is chapter 21, "The Transcendent Powers of the Tathagata." This chapter is known as a crucial chapter where the Buddha entrusts the mission of propagating the Lotus Sutra to the bodhisattvas springing up out of the earth, including Bodhisattva Superior Practice. It feels to me that the Buddha's message is directly addressed to those of us who are living today. Whether in Japan, Italy, France, Spain, or anywhere else in the world, I feel that the Buddha is sending us a message

of encouragement: Strive diligently to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra right where you are. In that sense, I hold this chapter very dear now.

Finally, could you share your greatest current wish and your dream for the future?

Unfortunately, war continues to wreak havoc in Ukraine and Palestine, and the world remains in a chaotic state, marked by increasing division and confrontation. There was once divine inspiration, through Cofounder Myoko Naganuma, that "The truth and spirit of the Lotus Sutra will spread throughout the world through Risscho Kosei-kai's work." I strongly feel that today is the time for Risscho Kosei-kai to fulfill its mission and role in spreading the teachings of the Lotus Sutra to the world. With this in mind, what I desire most right now is to disseminate the Lotus Sutra in and around Rome and strengthen the unity, growth, and development of the Risscho Kosei-kai sangha. This means nothing less than each one of us acquiring the Buddha's wisdom and compassion and sharing the teachings with many more people. While the ideal is very grand, my dream is to serve as the minister in Rome. To achieve this, I intend to study the Lotus Sutra and practice more diligently than ever in my daily training, and together with the members of the sangha, I will strive to engage in dissemination work and guide many Italian people toward happiness.



Mr. Tini (fourth from right) with members of the Rome hoza.

Practicing the Dharma in the Here and Now



The Ten Suchnesses: Cause and Condition

Dr. Dominick Scarangelo
International Advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai



This time, we will consider “such a cause” and “such a condition” and why understanding them is essential to living the Way in our daily lives.

In March, we learned that the ultimate cause of our behavior lies within ourselves—the disposition of our minds (such a nature). It is crucial that we understand this properly. In our daily lives, we encounter innumerable things and situations, and each one of them becomes a condition through which the potency (such a potential) arising from the mind’s disposition manifests as concrete action (such a function). These actions, in turn, become causes that bring about effects in the world.

Sometimes people misconstrue the statement “the cause is within ourselves” as claiming that the conditions we encounter do not affect our lives or limit our options. The Buddha’s teaching does not deny the existence of structural or socioeconomic factors that create difficult challenges. However, there remains a wide range of possible responses to the conditions we face, even when those conditions are harsh. Some ways of responding deepen our suffering, while others lessen it and guide us toward liberation.

Accepting that “the cause is within ourselves” is not passivity in the face of life’s difficulties. Just the opposite. It empowers us by showing that we always have agency. This freedom of the heart is an aspect of our “such a nature,” which naturally gives rise to the potential to act in ways that lead to greater happiness for both ourselves and others.

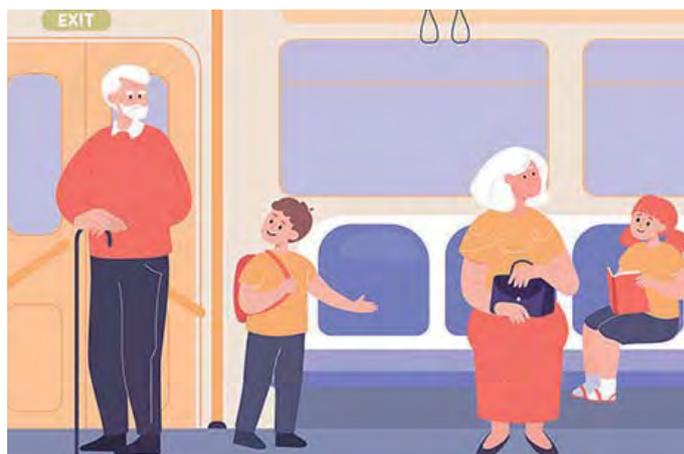
Founder Niwano explained the intersection of “such a cause” and “such a condition” with the example of a boy sitting on a crowded train. Kindness in the boy’s heart (such a nature) creates the potential (such a potential) for compassionate action (such a function). When he notices a frail elderly person

struggling to stand and immediately offers his seat, that potential manifests as action that becomes a cause for positive change in the world.

Rev. Kosho sometimes offers the example of choosing a cashier at a store. When faced with several open registers, we tend to choose the one staffed by the friendliest-looking cashier. But if our hearts are filled with a bodhisattva’s wish to bring people happiness, we make a different choice—we go to the unhappy-looking cashier. We cannot know for certain, but for all we do know, the smile we offer might transform the circumstances of that person’s day, or even their life. The Lotus Sutra teaches in chapter 2, “Skillful Means,” that even seemingly insignificant virtuous actions can give rise to a “butterfly effect”—not by causing a storm, but by setting in motion a chain of causes and conditions that transforms the world for the better.

In the language of the Ten Suchnesses, such transformations are referred to as “such a result” and “such a reward.” We will explore these further next time.

In closing, I would like to consider how our understanding of “such a cause” and “such a condition” can also be used to practice the Truth of the Cause and uncover the roots of our suffering.



Once, a friend pointed out that although I am generally patient and slow to anger, there was one situation in which I became surprisingly angry over something very minor. A coworker had repeatedly asked me about a translation I was working on, even though it was not due for several more weeks. I found this extremely annoying. “Why did you become angry?” my friend asked. Reflecting on my state of mind at the time (such a nature), I realized that I felt the coworker did not trust me to complete the task. I experienced their behavior as a judgment of me as unreliable and untrustworthy.

Why did I read so much into my coworker’s actions? As I stayed with that emotion and examined it more closely, I realized it echoed a feeling I had experienced as a child when a certain adult in my life belittled me as incapable and unreliable. Through further reflection, I recognized I had internalized that judgment in the form of a lasting defensiveness. So now when I feel that others are doubting me, I tend to respond with feelings of anger.

Although I am usually patient, I discovered that I do carry within me the potential for anger and that it tends to manifest when I encounter a particular condition—situations in which I feel doubted. Such circumstances become the condition that allows this latent anger to surface, giving rise to conflict and suffering. The ultimate cause is indeed within me, and to address this suffering, I must process the hurt and wounded self-esteem that remain in my heart from the past.

I share this experience because it taught me that by paying attention not only to my actions but also to how I respond differently to various conditions (such a condition), I can practice the Truth of the Cause and understand why I feel and act as I do. The Ten Suchnesses are not merely an abstract doctrine; they are the Lotus Sutra’s means for applying the Four Noble Truths directly to our lives.





Field Report from the Sangha

Rev. James A. Lynch, Jr.
Minister, New York Dharma Center

First and foremost, thank you for giving me this wonderful opportunity to share.

Recently, I reflected deeply on the teaching of “such a cause” and “such a condition” through my experience with a teaching colleague.

Early in my career as a college professor, I had a supervisor, and our relationship was often difficult. There were times when I felt misunderstood and even unfairly treated, including situations where I believed false reports had been made about me. Over time, our roles changed, and I eventually became their supervisor. However, the impressions I had formed did not simply disappear; they remained within me.

At one point, I learned that this person was being considered for my position. In that moment, I found myself immediately constructing a narrative about their intentions. Old feelings resurfaced, and through the lens of past experiences, I began to see them once again as someone who was calculating and perhaps even trying to undermine me. Without realizing it, I had reduced a living, changing person into a fixed image shaped by my own history.

Then something unexpected happened. This individual reached out to me and asked if we could speak privately. After some small talk, they shared a deeply personal and serious challenge they were facing with their family. In that moment, I was struck not only by the situation they were describing but by the trust they were placing in me.

As I listened, something within me softened. I felt tears lightly filling my eyes, just enough to moisten them. For in that moment, I felt both humbled and grateful, as if the situation itself had been arranged by the Buddha to reveal something I could not see on my own. I realized how quickly I had forgotten one of the most fundamental teachings of our practice—that we are not separate. The person before me, my

colleague, was not the character I had constructed but a human being experiencing suffering and seeking support.

All at once, I saw that what I had taken as a fixed condition was in fact still unfolding.

Reflecting more deeply, I began to see how causes and conditions are not static or one-directional. They move continuously, in a two-way flow, shaping and reshaping our relationships. My responses affected my colleague, just as her responses had affected me, and she was as much a cause for my growth as I was for hers.

What I had been reacting to was not simply the present moment, but a past-conditioned understanding that I had continued to carry forward.

When I could meet the situation with openness rather than from those fixed impressions, something shifted, not only in our interactions but within my own heart. What had once felt like an intractable situation, something to defend against or resist, became an opportunity to practice compassion.

This experience reminded me that our Buddhist practice is not something abstract or removed from our lives. When we become aware of how we are responding to causes and conditions, we begin to clearly see how easily we can fall into patterns of fixing others in place through our own perceptions. At the same time, through daily life and our practice, we are always given the freedom to respond differently.

In this way, life is not a static reality defined by fixed labels but a living flow in which every thought, word, and action participates. Even in difficult circumstances, if we meet conditions with awareness and compassion, we can begin to transform not only our relationships but the very field in which those relationships unfold.



Chapter 2 To Connect with Others

Put on the Robe of the Buddha

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano
Founder of Rissho Kosei-kai



Founder Nikkyo Niwano and Cofounder Myoko Naganuma visit Ibaraki Prefecture in 1952 to spread the Dharma.

The Importance of “Flexibility” in Human Relationships

When I think about what many people in today’s Japan seek most, I believe it is ultimately spiritual peace and an inner richness. The greatest concern then for many people is relationships, and they surely wish to maintain harmonious ties with those around them.

We tend to assume, “I’m living my life through my own efforts.” But human life is not as simple as that.

You often hear it said that the Japanese character for “person” [人] is formed with one line supporting another. Just as the composition of this character suggests, it is by drawing close to one another and supporting each other that we become truly human.

Incidentally, the two lines of this character differ in length. Does this imply that the longer line plays the leading role and the shorter line a supporting role? We might think so. Yet the reality of human relationships is that the person who seems to be doing the supporting is in fact being supported, and the one who appears to be supported is in fact supporting the other person. When people support one another, there is absolutely no difference in value among their contributions.



Therefore, it should be quite natural to feel that “Since my life is supported by so many people, I too should live in a way that supports those around me.” For instance, when we can be of help to someone, an indescribable happiness wells up within us. Surely everyone has experienced this kind of joy.

As a way to expand the circle of harmonious relationships around you, I would like you to reflect on the phrase “Put on the robe of the Tathagata,” which appears in the “Teachers of the Dharma” chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

The text reveals what “the robe of the Tathagata” means, explaining that “the robe of the Tathagata is the flexible and forbearing mind.”

As the word suggests, “flexibility” means having a gentle and harmonious heart. Not a thorny, irritable mind that causes one to oppose, criticize, and take jabs at others, but rather a spirit that allows you to warmly embrace those around you and share a deep sense of harmony with the people you encounter.

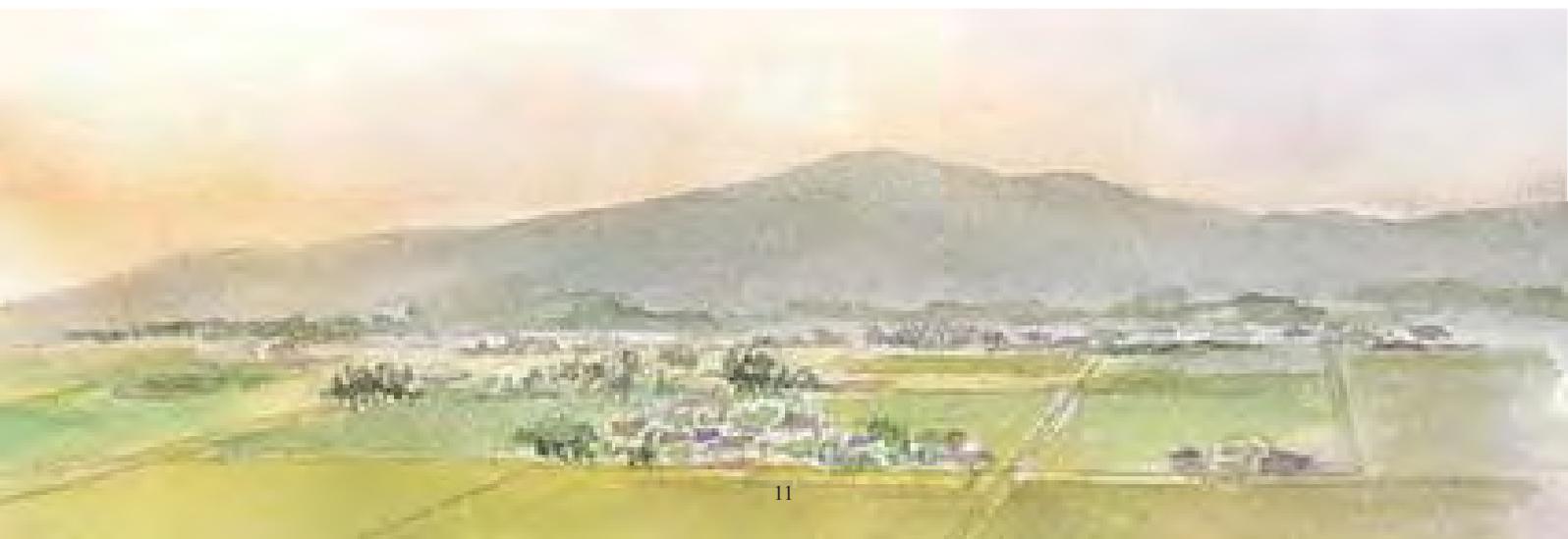
In the future, a consciousness of the fact that we are literally caused to live by all people and by all things, rather than the mentality that we are alive solely through our own efforts, will become crucial. I believe that this awareness of having been “brought to life” finds expression in the words “Put on the Tathagata’s robe.”

The robes worn by Shakyamuni and his disciples were made by washing cloth discarded in graveyards that had been used to wrap corpses, or old rags picked up from garbage heaps. The undamaged portions were cut out, sewn together, and then dyed a yellow ochre using red clay. This tradition embodies the humble awareness that we are brought to life by the people of the world and sustained by all that we are connected to.

When we, too, ponder what brings us to life, we necessarily conclude that we are caused to live by the gods and the buddhas, as well as all things and all people in the universe, and we arrive at the truth that to humbly accept that we are given the gift of life, and that we are sustained, is the supreme path to happiness.

When someone thinks “I was brought to life,” not even the slightest trace of feelings such as antagonism, rivalry, or censure arise. Only a sense of gratitude—simply, “How thankful I am”—wells up within their heart. And when a person feels this way, their heart naturally becomes flexible. Such a heart spontaneously reveals itself in their facial expressions, manner of speaking, and actions, giving a pleasant impression to the people they encounter. And from there, ideal human relationships are born.

Bodai no me o okosashimu (Kosei Publishing, 2018), pp. 95–97



Like a Quietly Blooming Violet

Rev. Takashi Maeda
Director, Rissho Kosei-kai International

Hello, everyone. This month marks the birth of Shakyamuni. It is said that the English word “April” originates from the Latin verb *aperire*, meaning “to open.” Spring is a season when flowers open and life begins to sprout. I feel a deep significance in the fact that Shakyamuni was born during this time of year.

In this month’s message, President Niwano describes the violet as a flower that, while inconspicuous, lives resiliently and offers gentle comfort to people’s hearts. Today, we live in an age in which results and recognition are quickly visible, and we tend to rush, always aiming higher. However, the violet does not compare itself with others; it blooms quietly where it belongs at the appropriate time. Even when blown by the wind, it remains firmly rooted, showing a small yet steady strength and offering us quiet courage. I believe there is a similar nobleness in the way people quietly devote themselves to others in their daily lives.

Shakyamuni’s declaration at his birth, “I alone am honored, in heaven and on earth,” teaches us that each and every life is irreplaceable and precious. It does not mean that only oneself is superior. That is why, rather than comparing ourselves with others, each of us should simply do our best where we belong.

Cherishing and accumulating small joys and encounters helps cultivate our hearts. As the President shares in his message, let us proceed through this month like the violet—true to ourselves, without pride, and without conflict. Such a way of living will allow our buddha nature to shine quietly and, in time, gently illuminate those around us.



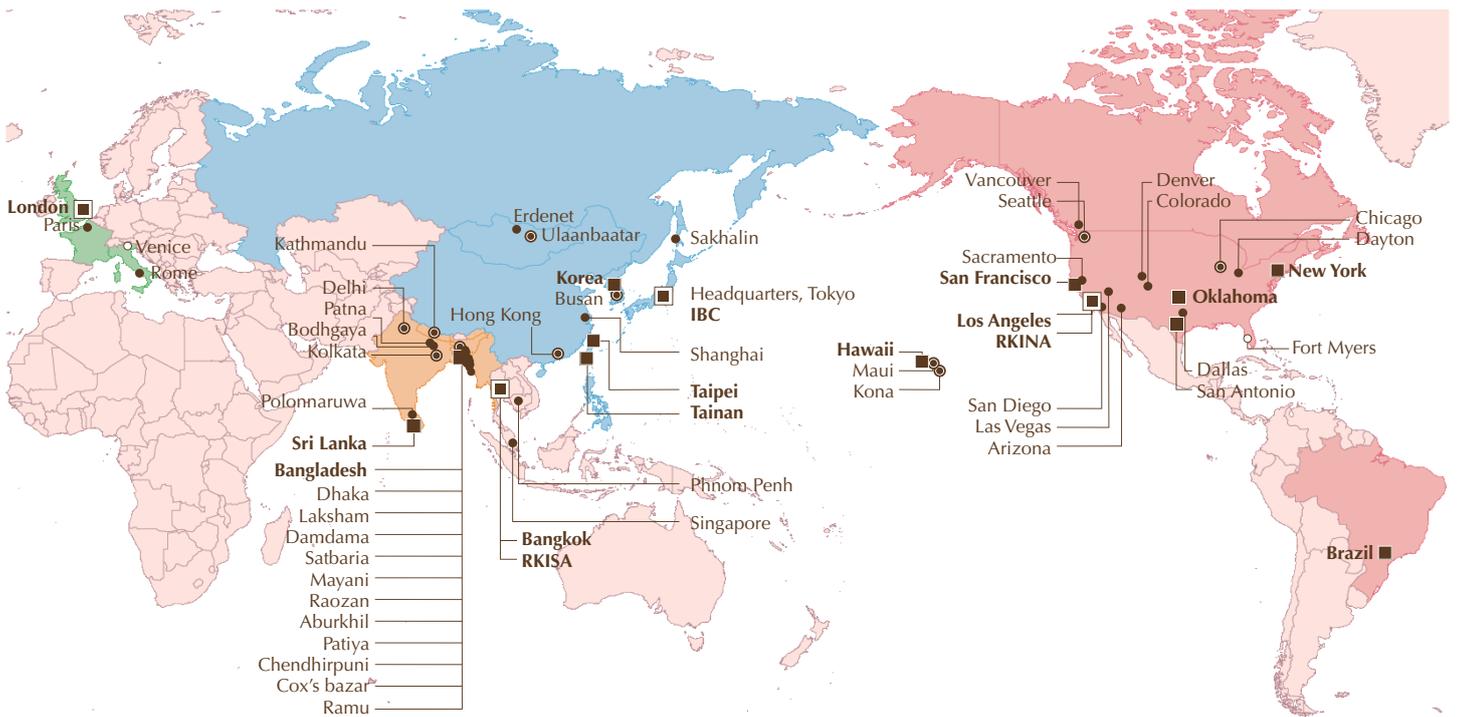
Members of Rissho Kosei-kai International welcome Ms. Swarna Padmini Delgodaat (front row, center) at their office in Tokyo on March 12. Ms. Delgodaat visited the headquarters from the Sri Lanka Dharma Center to give a Dharma Journey speech at the Great Sacred Hall. To her left is Director Maeda.

Rissho Kosei-kai International

Make Every Encounter Matter



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