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June 2021 Newsletter

Hello, everyone!

June has arrived with the “fresh green trees and plants” for us to enjoy.

How are you? Hope all is well with you and your families.

In New York, while there is a mix of people who are walking the streets without masks and those who continue to wear masks, there seems to be a glimpse of slight brightness showing its signs in the city.



And yet, things have not settled, with many people throughout the world still losing their lives because of the pandemic. Let us pray for all those who have passed away from the Coronavirus infectious disease that they may rest in peace. And for those who are presently receiving treatments in the hospitals and those who are recovering in their homes, we pray for their speedy and safe recovery.

And now, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone in the healthcare industry for their dedication without rest and to all the essential workers and various governmental agencies and services who continue to support our daily lives.

Around the middle of last month, an immigration officer from the NYC Field Office of the US Department of Homeland Security came to our NY Center regarding my application for the extension of my Working VISA. He came to inspect our facility and to interview me. In response to several questions during the interview, there was an occasion to explain, in a short period of time, about Buddhism and Rissho Kosei-kai. Unlike our conversations with those we know well, when we are aware of the content of what the other person understands, I realized the importance of clearly and concisely conveying the overview of Buddhism to someone who encounters it for the first time.

Preparation to convey succinctly in an easy to understand manner, “what is Buddhism?” and “what Rissho Kosei-kai is doing?” is necessary. Just as important is for us to fully understand what the other person who is listening wishes to know, instead of just giving one-sided explanation. This realization provided many hints on how careful we should be when we engage in missionary activities, from now on. Hereafter, I will frankly gather and organize such materials to share with all of you, with hopes that they may serve as useful information.

Now, today, I would like to share with you about “The way people see and hear, and their understanding of that.” The fundamental basis of Buddhism on the way to see things attributed to Buddhism is to see things “as they are,” precisely “as they really are.” However, people often cannot see “things as they really are.” These cases of distorted views occur because of the prejudice, preconceived ideas and illusions of the person who is seeing. In Buddhism, we train ourselves (practice) to eliminate our habits that causes such distorted views.

Although our ears may hear, but we may not be listening, or our eyes may see, but we may not be seeing clearly. The difference lies between the organs of the eyes and ears and the mindful understanding through their functions. For example, there is the famous story regarding Magellan’s expedition. Magellan was in search of a new route and was sailing around the islands in the South Pacific Ocean with four ships. When they arrived at one of the islands, about ten people landed ashore with a small boat where the native people started to gather. Those natives later drew a picture of the occurrence. That picture, which was found later, depicted the small boat that came ashore and Magellan was the first person with the group coming off the boat.

However, the four large ships anchored offshore were not portrayed at all. The reason for that, it is said, is because although the large ships may have definitely reflected in their eyes, since they had never seen such large ships until then, there was no recognition and no recollection of what they were.

This clearly shows the difference between something just being reflected in our eyes and something recognized as a projected image in our minds. Likewise, a difference occurs between something that we hear with our ears and something that we listen with recognition. We use expressions such as “hearing but not listening” or “certain things grab

our attention.” Rather than just the organs of the eyes and the ears working, isn’t it when what people see and hear are recognized in the brain that such recognition remain in the minds?

Even in our conversations with others, although we may be facing each other and speaking, unless our minds are properly open to the content of the conversation, it would merely be exchange of words and would not be a true interaction. Words are tools to convey its meaning and the concept of what one is trying to say. If the content cannot be conveyed to the other person, mutual conversation is not possible. Our Founder has often told us the following: People who are good conversationalist are good listeners, and make efforts to understand the other person’s stories well. It is important to listen, not only to the words being said, but also to what the person is trying to say. This is precisely true.

To fully understand what we see and hear...in other words, it is precisely when we accurately remember in our minds that we actually see and hear for the first time. Therefore, when preconceptions, prejudices and jumping to conclusions due to impatience and haste occur, our mind cannot understand accurately.

Shakyamuni Buddha explains such situation with the parable of the water in the bowls.

There are three bowls filled with water.

In the first bowl, if the water is muddied in red and blue, when one tries to see one’s face, it is impossible to see one’s face as is. Similarly, when a person’s mind is muddied with greed, one cannot see one’s face as is.

The second bowl is placed over fire and the water is boiling. When one tries to see one’s face, the bubbles make it impossible to see one’s face. Similarly, when one’s mind boils over with anger, one cannot see things as is.

If the third bowl was covered with moss and grass, it is impossible to see one’s face as is. Similarly, when person’s mind is covered with folly and doubt, one cannot see things as is.

If the water is not muddied, not boiling in bubbles, and not covered with moss and grass, the person can see one’s face accurately as is.

In that way, to accurately understand is called the “Right view.”

Let us give our daily effort in diligence to attain a crystal clear mental state so that we may see “things as is” “as is.”

Gassho

Rev. Tomokazu Hatakeyama

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