



Rissho Kosei-kai of New York

320 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016 TEL: (212) 867-5677

E-mail address: koseiny@aol.com, Website : <http://rk-ny.org>



May 2023 Newsletter

Hello, everyone! How are you doing?

May has finally arrived and spring is in full swing.

Without the thick coats, mufflers, and gloves that I recently could not take off for even a moment, I feel light and airy whenever I deeply breathe in the fresh air outside. However, as we look around the world, it seems that spring has not yet arrived, with difficult issues erupting one after another. Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues and as result the global economy is in a state of turmoil, with no improvement in sight.

This month, I would like to share with you my recent thoughts on Chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra, "Skillful Means." In "Skillful Means," after completing his meditation, Shakyamuni Buddha stood up and addressed Shariputra, who was considered as the disciple foremost in wisdom: "The Truth of the Universe in which I attained supreme perfect awakening, is so profound that all of you cannot possibly understand it. Only a buddha together with a buddha can discuss, fathom, and attain this Ultimate Truth." This is how this chapter begins.

Then he goes on to explain The Truth and the Workings of the Universe, saying that the world came to be based on the Doctrine of Ten Suchnesses, that among all things, each has such an appearance, such a nature, such an embodiment, such a potential, such a function, such a cause, such a condition, such an effect, such a reward, and from the first to the last, such an ultimate identity.

My question is this. Why did Shakyamuni Buddha teach the Ten Suchnesses which explains the Workings of everything in this world while saying this teaching is so profound that only the buddha together with the buddha can at first understand and attain it. If it can only be understood between the buddha and the buddha, it would be impossible for us to understand. However, the story does not end there. After that, the Buddha's true feelings and wish is expressed: "My wish is for all people to attain this Supreme Perfect Awakening in the same way that I have attained Supreme Perfect Awakening." This indicates his ultimate wish.

To achieve this, he said, it is necessary to expound the teachings in proper sequences, because people will not be able to understand if all the content of the teachings are suddenly expounded at once.

I have come to realize that the key to solving this question is knowing the existence of the buddha nature that resides in each one of us. Although it is difficult to understand with our superficial minds that tend to alternate from joy to sorrow and hope to fear in our daily lives, the Lotus Sutra teaches us the importance of realizing the existence of "buddha-nature," the same nature as the Buddha, that dwells deep within us. Therefore, instead of regarding "only the buddha together with the buddha can fathom" as being about other people from a third-party perspective, rather, it is about understanding

that when “the Buddha and the buddha nature within me meet,” the wisdom of the Buddha can be obtained.

Moreover, even though Shakyamuni Buddha said he should refrain from expounding the teachings, Shariputra implored three times to please teach them. Because Shariputra was so eager, Shakyamuni Buddha speaks about the universe, the nature of this world, and then his true wish.

However, some 5,000 disciples in the assembly stood up, thinking if it was that difficult to understand, it would be impossible for them and left. Had I been there, I do not know if I would have left as well. Without our heart’s desire to understand and learn at any cost, we will not be able to understand the true heart of the Buddha. The importance of Seeking the Way is indicated here.

According to a Buddhist scholar, this series of exchanges was not a mere refusal of Shakyamuni Buddha to speak about his teachings, but rather a skillful means to elicit a truly deep and truth-seeking mind through shock therapy. It is stated that when our heart and mind is ready, Shakyamuni Buddha's true intention for “All people to attain this Supreme Perfect Awakening as I have,” his wish (Original Vow) is being spoken.

Through such dramatic development of the relationship between the master and his disciples depicted in “Skillful Means,” one cannot help but feel the deep compassion and wish of Shakyamuni Buddha for the people.

President Nichiko Niwano teaches that there are three ways to learn and explain the teachings.

1st is to learn and understand with one’s head.

2nd is to receive and understand with one’s heart.

3rd is to accept it with one’s soul and make it one's own.

When we communicate what we have learned with our head, the other person will understand it with his/her head.

When we communicate what we have received with our heart, the other person will understand with his/her heart and mind.

When we communicate what we have received with our soul, the other person will receive it with his/her soul and be moved by it.

To deepen our faith, it is important to receive with complete devotion of our soul, and to transmit from our soul.

We are taught that by purifying our minds through our daily good deeds (bodhisattva practices), we can reveal the "buddha nature" within ourselves which will connect to our encounter with the Buddha. Let us believe in our own potential and devote ourselves this month with vigor and vitality.



Gassho

Rev. Tomokazu
Hatakeyama

Minister RKNY