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## April 2024 Newsletter

Hi Everyone!

I hope that you are well.

Well Happy April!

With the introduction of April, we have a month that I am truly excited about, and I think in many ways is deeply connected to our Bodhisattva practice. For April is named after Aphrodite the Greek Goddess of Love and is related to the Latin verb “aperire” meaning to open, because April “opens” the buds of leaves and flowers. Isn’t that Beautiful!

And specifically in Japan with the beginning of April, through the example of the Cherry Blossoms, we also get to see and experience the deep and profound connection of the opening these blossoms to a new season of beauty and joy.

Interestingly, from here, if we look at our daily practice through April’s kind lens, then our everyday encounters can act as opportunities for us to “open up” our lives through love, kindness, and compassion to help reveal the beauty of the world. That is, we open up not only our own lives to the inner life of the Buddha but also reveal the Buddha nature in the hearts and minds of others as well.

Also, this opening and budding process of life and flowers, while seemingly at times an individual act is also a collective act of mutual recognition amongst believers and strangers as well.

For example, for a flower’s beauty to radiate out into the world the flower relies upon water, soil, minerals in that soil, and sunlight, as well as the regular movement of the earth in a proper time and sequence, all so that the individual flower can open up and properly bloom. It is sort of a natural Itai Doshin (Many in body, one in Spirit) for the one flower to live.

Indeed, all of these causes and conditions must work harmoniously, though different in body and function, so that a single flower can bloom. This also is the essence of dependent origination, and if we think about it in an unbiased way, what a great Sangha the Flower has supporting it!

So Itai Doshin, many in body, one in spirit or mind and applying this to our daily activities is very important for us in order to impact the environment so that we can all be on the Bodhisattva path that Founder Niwano wanted us to be on.

The question is, yes, we know this idea of Itai Doshin but how does this understanding lead us individually through our Buddhist practice to world peace?

Let’s look at this together briefly.

Well, in order to do so there is another key concept that is closely related to Itai Doshin that I want to introduce here which is “Esho Funi.”

Ok then, what is Esho Funi?

Well, Esho Funi is the Buddhist concept that states that “Life and the Environment are One”, (依正不二) Here, Esho Funi is the basic Buddhist understanding that a person’s life and their environment, though appearing to be separate things, are actually at their core connected and one. This means that our life and all that happens around us are one single phenomenal reality.

Also, Esho Funi, on a practical basis, means that when we change our internal life condition, for example, by cherishing every encounter, or by putting others first, then when our minds and hearts do in fact change, our environment must change as well. This is important when we put into practice the teachings of RK then our life will change.

To think of it in another way, your life as a human being can be thought of like a tree and its shadow (the “Environment”), is such that when the condition or state of the tree changes its accompanying shadow must change as well.

The fact that things must change when you change is an extremely important point, and why we can be so confident and diligent in our practice.

This is why the Buddha’s frequent promises that we ALL will become Buddhas, as a result of practicing in our daily life, is not just wishful thinking, but rather is based upon the very structure of life itself. Thus, if we practice in accordance with the sincere wishes of the Buddha, we must become Buddhas.

For when we realize that our Buddha nature, when recognized, guides our outer experience, it is like having discovered a buried treasurer within ourselves which is always available for us to use regardless of outer circumstances.

While this does not mean everything in the world “will go” our way, it does mean that your ability to courageously face life’s challenges will grow exponentially, for you be able to see life as it is, and with this vision and insight world peace becomes a realistic possibility

Therefore, when we chant the O’Daimoku or the Kyoten with this awareness in our hearts and minds, we begin to be tolerant of others and to realize that people are not obstacles to our happiness but rather as Founder Niwano says:

If we approach others with this spirit of tolerance, we will naturally begin to extend their potential. This feeling is what we call compassion. (New Commentary on the Threefold Lotus Sutra, vol.8, pg.49)

Hence, according to the Founder, people are not obstacles to us at all; and most importantly, that we are here to help others to “extend their potential,” and that the resultant feeling is in fact our compassion moving to the surface of our life.

We must understand that the revealing of this truth to ourselves and the sharing of this truth about life with others is the very essence of our vows as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and the very key to our Peace Movement.

Kosho Niwano said it this way:

We are alive to accomplish just one thing, which we do through the medium of all the experiences and encounters of our entire life. That one thing is to discover the treasure in our hearts and reveal it. To realize this in the course of life and make our buddha-nature manifest is the one thing the Buddha wishes for us. (“The Buddha in Everyone’s Heart”, Kosho Niwano, pg. 106)

Finally, our faith, when based upon Kosho Niwano’s valuable insights above, like the month of April, opens up our hearts and minds like Cherry Blossoms facing the sun, so that we can naturally share our beauty with the world.

Well enough for now, let’s practice together this month knowing, that if we work together that our happiness and joy are assured, and that true peace is possible, all thanks to the wisdom and great compassion of the Buddha.

Thank you so very much for your time.

Wishing you the very best always,

Gassho

Rev. James Hiroshi Lynch  
Minister RKNY

