



# Rissho Kosei-kai of New York

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## May 2024 Newsletter

Hi Everyone!

I hope that you are well.

With this month we see a change in the weather and the season.

So Welcome, Welcome Joyful May!

Let's take a look, May comes from the Latin word *Maius*, which probably refers to the **goddess Maia**. She embodied the concept of growth, both in nature and in business.

With May we take another step in the year, and towards the upcoming summer months.

Each month we have so many challenges, and May is no different.

Indeed, desires and thoughts constantly emerge in our life like the wind; and as I was preparing this month's message so many things are happening here in the New York City area as well, whether it is significant demonstrations concerning the Palestinian and Israeli conflict, to massive problems with migration, to ongoing problems centered around subway safety.

The issue is what can we all do with so many problems confronting us as well as having our own very real concerns centered on jobs, family, Buddhism, making a living and for many of us just trying to make it through the day.

Thinking on it carefully, since this is the month of May, and since the month is connected to growth in nature and in business, I wanted to touch upon something that President Nichiko Niwano recently mentioned concerning our desires or our own personal delusions.

I think that a good question for this month then is how does President Niwano want us to view our own personal desires connected to enlightenment if they are by definition delusional?

Hmm that is a good question, isn't it?

Because delusions take us away from the truth or do they?

Importantly, President Niwano tackled this idea in last month's April 2024 guidance, and it was printed in Living the Lotus when he stated the following:

Delusion can also become the driving force for progress and improvement. As stated by the teaching **“Delusions are inseparable from awakening,”** we could say that delusion and awakening are ultimately one and the same. If humans are endowed with the power to awaken to the true Dharma precisely because they possess great delusions, then delusions must be blessings that sustain and nurture us. Perhaps no one is more likely to have a major change of heart than someone with great delusions.

This is very powerful, for it means that in our everyday life our very desires can be the fuel that moves us to our enlightenment, and importantly not sometime in the future, but right now!

In Japanese this Buddhist concept is known as *Bonnō-Soku-Bodai* or “Earthly Desires Equal Enlightenment” [煩惱即菩提], and is based on the view that earthly desires cannot exist independently on their own; therefore one can attain enlightenment without eliminating earthly desires.

It is important to note that this contrasts with some Buddhist views that extinguishing earthly desires is a prerequisite for enlightenment. According to these views, earthly desires and enlightenment are two independent and opposing factors, and that the two simply cannot coexist. Therefore, only when we can eliminate desires can you even think about enlightenment!

That is with this understanding, problems that I mentioned earlier, like war, migration, and personal problems can only be effectively dealt with until our own personal desires are eliminated.

I hope that you understand that this is why our own Rissho Kosei Kai teachings are truly transformational in that our own earthly desires and difficulties are one with and are actually inseparable from our own personal enlightenment. Hence RK's approach is truly a revolutionary take on Buddhism and life.

As Rissho Kosei Kai Buddhist practitioners, if we are paying attention, we can see through our own practice with our everyday lives, that all things, even our earthly desires and difficulties are manifestations of the Great Life Force in the Universe.

It also seems to me that phrases in Rissho Kosei Kai like "Cherishing Every Encounter" or "Putting others First" have very deep significance and are not mere slogans, but rather are an invitation for each of us throughout the day, to examine our thinking and our desires to see how the pursuit of those desires fits within our Bodhisattva aspirations to improve.

As Kosho Sama has stated on this matter:

The difficulties we face also arise from the Buddha's compassion, because they lead us to seek a deeper understanding of the Dharma, thus guiding us to a truly tranquil state of mind. Because all of our encounters can enable us to learn more of the working of the Buddha, when we can discern the Buddha in our problems and in other people, we can begin to think of the Buddha as acting in our behalf. If we live in consonance with the Truth, the teaching of the Buddha will bring us good results in the form of liberation. That is the world of Truth taught by the Lotus Sutra, which can liberate us completely, down to our roots. That is the essence of true faith. (Niwano, Kosho. *The Buddha in Everyone's Heart* . page 67. Kosei Publishing Company).

So, we don't run from our desires but rather we run to them so that we can see ourselves and others "as Is" and immediately experience enlightenment.

Also, this means that when we engage in *Michibiki*, (connecting people to the Dharma) and *Tedori*, (supporting fellow members in the faith) we remember that those we interact with also have a right to their dreams and desires as well knowing that their dreams are directly tied to their own enlightenment when they take up the practice. With this understanding as our base, we know that all we encounter can be "saved" from suffering.

Understanding this is real spiritual growth, and the essence of May, whereby we seek to grow internally and in our worldly affairs.

Finally, as when I mentioned Esho- Funi (Life and the Environment are One) last month, that as far as *Bonnō-Soku-Bodai* or Earthly Desires Equals Enlightenment goes, this does not mean as Buddhist Practitioners everything will go our way, but rather it does mean, when we see our lives as being connected to the Great Life Force of the Universe then all phenomena can be, when properly viewed, as occurring for our good and that this insight can bring us boundless joy and unimaginable happiness.

Again, let's practice, Itai Doshin, many in body one in spirit in May, knowing that if we work together, and hold our desires as precious gifts 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

