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May 2022 Newsletter

Hello, everyone. How are you doing?

Although there are still some chilly days, with the cherry blossoms in full bloom, we can feel the arrival of spring at this time of the year.

The spread of COVID 19 has entered its third year without end in sight. Recently, there is talk that the new strain of Omicron may take over. To continue with caution is necessary.

Under these circumstances, there is the Russian invasion in Ukraine with numerous victims including many civilians. Amid criticism from all over the world, the invasion by the Russian army continues. The tragedy that keeps repeating even now in this era is heartbreaking.

Let us wholeheartedly pray for those who passed with COVID 19 and for the precious spirits of those who were sacrificed in Ukraine so that they may all Rest in Peace.

Now, in my November message last year, I wrote about the three poisons that dwell in people's hearts and minds. The three poisons are "greed, anger, and ignorance." They are about the heart and mind to devour and crave (greed), the heart and mind of aversion and hatred (anger), and the heart and mind of foolishness and without wisdom (ignorance). However, we are told that of the three, we must be most careful of the heart and mind of aversion and hatred (anger). That is because anger obscures all the efforts of our practice. We all think that anger is not good when our heart and mind is calm. But in our encounters, something even minor might rub us in a wrong way, we may become agitated and start to rant and might even resort to violence.

In Buddhism, we deeply delve into our hearts and minds and analyze why, although we know all that, such thoughts and actions suddenly pop up from within us. At present, according to the disciplines of depth psychology, it is explained as the work of the consciousness that appears on the surface and the deep consciousness that lies invisibly below the surface. It is truly wonderful that so long ago, Buddhism had already intuitively discerned that.

In Buddhism, the workings of the mind are called the five senses and are divided into "eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body." What we capture with these five senses is collectively called consciousness.

These are "the five senses" and "consciousness" we perceive, but they are only on the surface. Apart from consciousness and will, on a deeper level, there is an existence called "manas vijñana." This is the workings of the mind that cannot help but be "obsessed about ourselves," even though we think "I should stop being so obsessive about myself," or have likes and dislikes despite our will, and unknowingly get stuck on "myself." (It is the deep ego consciousness that gets stuck on 'I am').

Behind that there is the world of the mind that is stuck on our life called "alaya vijñana." This has the power to maintain our life, such as continuous working of our heart and the response of our immune system, regardless of our consciousness, and is totally concerned about our life.

The workings deeply in the mind that is obsessed with the self "manas vijñana" and deeply concerned about our life, itself, "alaya vijñana" dwell unconsciously in the depths of our consciousness.

I think the importance of the “Fundamental Faith and Practice” is that it teaches us in a very easy to understand way how to correct our own hearts and minds after understanding such analysis of the workings of the mind. By repeatedly practicing in our daily lives, such as doing the morning and evening sutra recitation, visiting the Center (or joining the Zoom) on Memorial Days each month, learning the doctrine, participating in the Hoza, engaging in the practice of reaching out (tedori), we acquire the good habits and customs of Buddhists which naturally lead us to purify the unconscious world deep in our minds and hearts. And through the heart and mind to pray and wish for other’s happiness, the heart and mind of gratitude for everything, the heart and mind of realizing our mistakes and showing remorse (sange), we will start to purify our hearts and minds. This includes the importance of walking the Bodhisattva Way with the heart and mind of “Others First”

Therefore, by training such consciousness that exist deep in our hearts and minds, we can gradually change to the heart and mind of the buddha’s wisdom. And that is about devoting ourselves to believe the Buddha’s message full of hope and to practice accordingly, just as it is indicated in the “The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wondrous Dharma” that “People can become awakened, they can become buddhas.”

Last month, the members of the Chicago Chapter in charge of the Founding of Rissho Kosei-kai’s Anniversary Ceremony held a wonderful presentation. The members of Ft. Myers will be in charge of this month’s Memorial Day Service. The combined efforts of all the Sangha members are producing great results, but I think it is the spirit of harmony that unites everyone that is better than anything else.

Let us devote ourselves to work together in high spirits.



Gassho

Rev. Tomokazu Hatakeyama

Minister RKNY