

What a Buddha Deserves
By JEANNIE OLANDER
SGI-USA Jr. High School Division Chief

While everyone has a sun in his or her heart, all too few are aware it exists. The Lotus Sutra is the scripture that reveals the brilliant sun of Buddhahood inherent in our lives. (SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, *Lectures on the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, p. 25)

Although I originally started chanting as a means to achieve world peace, as I continued to practice I realized that I was a very sad girl. I worked hard to create harmony and goodness in everything around me, but I think I did this as a sort of apology for my existence. As I continued my practice, I became aware that I did not believe in my Buddha nature. This meant that I doubted Buddhism.

I have been working as an associate producer in the TV production business for the last two years. I have advanced quickly in this industry since moving to Los Angeles just four years ago, changing my circumstances from working in the most unbearable aspects of the industry to the most exceptional. For example, from a crazy boss who would call me at 4:00 a.m. on Sunday morning to get my feedback on some things she had on her mind, to a humanistic boss who would worry about me if I had to work late — and would stay late to help me finish; from minimum wage to six times that; from backstabbing co-workers to true comrades.

Although I made these conspicuous advancements, my underlying belief remained. I didn't perceive my Buddha nature. I could seek it out only when under serious attack or when chanting for others. I oscillated between confidence and self-doubt easily and frequently.

Recently, I was working on a nine-week project — not a lot of time to produce a one-hour TV special. When we were in our fourth week, it turned out the network had a programming problem. Our show had to be completed three weeks early! Insane work hours ensued. And the show received the highest ratings the network has ever had for a prime-time special.

However, after everyone's hard work, we were reminded when we turned in our time cards that we were to be paid a flat rate, that our overtime would jeopardize the budget. I was not surprised that the 117 hours overtime I had worked in one month would not be paid to me. As I chanted, my mind was drowning in negative thoughts: Do I really deserve to be paid or were those hours the extra time it took me because I was inefficient? Why should I be paid for my inefficiency?

Oddly, during this faith-mustering campaign, an executive from the same company called to ask if I would work on two new projects. I procrastinated and chanted and read President Ikeda's *Lectures on the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*. “The brilliant sun of Buddhahood inherent in our lives” — through the lectures I realized the recitation of the sutra is all about awakening to one's Buddha nature. I suddenly understood that because I was unable to perceive my Buddha nature, my environment was also unable to perceive it.

The day after this epiphany I bumped into the executive at the office. “I feel that on the last show I was backed into a bad deal and unfairly compensated,” I told him.

“Please don't say anything more,” he said. “Jeannie, I think you are a very good person and a tremendous asset to this company. Whatever you think we owe you, just write it down on an invoice and I'll pay it. Also, I want to know what we can offer you. If you want

to be a director, a producer, an art director — I want to give you the opportunity.”

I almost fainted. I was fully compensated for my overtime. But more than that this experience helped me understand my human revolution and President Ikeda’s unwavering dedication to enlighten humanity.

WT

Title: What a Buddha Deserves
Subject: World Tribune 08/01/97 n.3150 p.11 WT970801p11
Author: Jeannie Olander
Keywords: Buddha Career Daishonin Deserves Experiences Major Nichiren Pages Producer Work Writings
Youth