

## WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

### **‘Recovery’ Touches A Chord**

Words cannot adequately express the profound joy I felt upon reading...“Buddhists in Recovery” (Oct. 3 *World Tribune*, p. 1).

However, some well-meaning folks of sincere faith have worried that this type of activity might lead to “fragmentation” and dilution of the energy and effort of the larger SGI organization. I have been told that even one hour a month of this type of activity is an hour potentially wasted — an hour that could be spent on neighborhood activities, visiting members or simply chanting. I have been sincerely chanting about this. I keep coming up with the conviction to continue to chant and polish my life as the prime point to show actual proof. I must also support my district and larger SGI activities, do propagation and study, and receive continual guidance.

But beyond that, I believe I can continue to work on the quality of my recovery through any positive means of my choice. As the *World Tribune* article demonstrates, I feel that beyond the ultimate solution in prayer, no one tool is “the” answer to persons seeking support....

— TERRI FONG, Sacramento, Calif.

Thank you for your article on “Buddhists in Recovery” (Oct. 3 *World Tribune*). I know well the demon called *alcoholism*. Generations of men in my family have died feeding this demon....

This demon cannot be defeated by logic or bargaining.... But there is one thing the demon cannot stand, and that is the light of day. The admittance to another who knows the same demon. It hates this, for it only lives in denial. So after trying to will it away, I took a difficult step, but one I knew I had to take to survive. I still clearly remember the rainy night that I stepped down into the dark cold basement of a church and shared my story with people who knew the same demon very well. It was a terribly difficult step to take. It felt like defeat. Like I was admitting my Buddhist practice didn’t work. You see, at that time there was no support inside the organization for what I was doing. That is why I told no one.

I, too, had some problems with the 12 steps, but that isn’t what makes these groups powerful. What makes them work is the people. We are wounded by others and can only heal in the presence of others. This is what it means to be human.... So I congratulate the *World Tribune* for writing about these support groups and the SGI members who participate in them. Facing the demon ain’t easy, but sometimes pain sure can feel good.

— DIXON HAMBY, Bellevue, Wash

Thank you for contributing to public discussion about the nature of addiction and recovery in the lives of SGI members (see Oct. 3 *World Tribune*, p. 1)....

Because they changed my life, I think it is vital that people speak responsibly about Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-anon. Sadly, your article did not do this. Though it was an excellent effort and picture of members in recovery, it inadvertently contributed to a misimpression about AA that is quite common. Because AA does not engage in public relations or media interviews, it was the *World Tribune*’s responsibility to give thoughtful consideration to how they present the 12 steps to members. Unfortunately you missed 11 of them. Stopping at the first step is a common mistake.

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Just as many Buddhists dump their problems in front of the Gohonzon, many AAs and Al-anons will dump their problems in the lap of a Higher Power. More experienced leaders and peers in AA are always present to remind them that recovery lies in personal responsibility (step 4 — the one most often avoided by those in recovery, Buddhist or otherwise). This is guidance of the strictest sort and is present in the 12 steps.... Please, work harder to avoid the mistaken impression that a Buddhist will not find recovery in the 12 steps....

— EDITH SHILLUE, Arlington, Mass.

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