

PERSPECTIVE: Turning Point
By TAMARA JENKINS
New York

Long period of building strength. Feeling hope and joy. Growing confidence. This core in my life — I feel it strengthening every day. Fighting the long battle against negative thinking, a feeling of undeserving and doubt, I have built the muscle of faith and a belief in myself. It's there. Buddhahood is there inside me.

Six years I've been building a dream. A monumental dream few have believed in. Enemies from inside and out defeated one by one on the hazardous climb toward the distant summit. Wait — there it is now in sight! One more push forward....

Suddenly sideswiped. An avalanche.

Begins with an exhausting week physically and emotionally. Then a cold that turns to infection in my lungs. Go to work anyway — that day job that challenges my last hope. With so much more to offer, why am I still here after all this time? What is it? What does it mean?

Finding it hard to breath. Wheezing, coughing, hacking, blowing poison. Now the clutch — 10 years since my last life-threatening asthma attack. I thought it was gone! This can't be! Panic followed by calm. No, I won't let this happen again. I've been so good — almost cured. Reading *World Tribune* all day while waiting. Trying to breathe, thinking positively against the insidious onslaught. "I thought the Gohonzon worked!" "Three steps forward, one step back." "Trust the Gohonzon!" "What's wrong with me?" "Am I dying?" "I'm so frightened! Help! Somebody, help!" "You don't need anyone's help." Chanting daimoku inside.

That night, it's worse than ever. Neither of my inhalers are working. This is real. Not enough oxygen to the brain. Getting emotional. Frightened — the feeling of hysteria I keep only at arm's length. Who is this person who has invaded my "good Buddhist" self? Who is this impostor? Get out! Get out! Nam-myoho-renge-kyo! Can only say a few daimoku at a time, each breath so limited and time consuming.

Make it through the night, my husband and I holding pressure points for hours on end.

Back on steroids and a multitude of other medications I swore I would never take again. Gohonzon, please — what is it? What is it? This time I choose to trust. What is it? Slowly the dark cavernous reality is revealed. This is me! This is my life! All the years of training how to think like a Buddhist, how to act like a Buddhist, they mean nothing now. This is me. Hello, Tamara Jenkins. I see the weakness, the cause of my suffering. And this time I have the courage to see her — to see me — for real, for the first time. I hold her in my arms. You are a Buddha. I will change this.

All my dreams — this six-year struggle to make the impossible possible, to become a driving force in my chosen field. I'm one step away. But I can't be that capable, strong, responsible, dependable creator standing atop that mountain, and this frightened, trembling innocent who wants only to flee this land of Mappo at the same time.

Long held guidance from SGI President Ikeda: "Only those who know the power of this Gohonzon can make the impossible possible." But wait — a new sentence takes hold. "First you must pray to have the kind of courageous practice that can make the impossible possible." Chanting five hours, three hours.... What does that mean? Truth.

Health up and down, breathing better, but heaviness in my chest. Find an acupuncturist/herbalist who believes I can cure my asthma by curing the underlying cause, heat in the lungs. Treatment begins.

Back to the Gohonzon. What is heat in my lungs? Fear, weakness, pain. I must forge this

Title: Perspective: Turning Point

Subject: World Tribune 10/31/97 n.3163 p.3 WT971031p03 New York, New York

Author: Tamara Jenkins

Keywords: December Experiences Health July Opinion Perspectives Point Tribune Turning World York

impurity out of the gold that is my life. *No matter what* — an old phrase that feels like a long-lost friend. I hold its hand for hours in front of the Gohonzon. Years of panic disorder must have been related to this inherent weakness! Sometimes I feel as though I carry the world's pain. "I just want everything to be OK! A world without problems, where everyone is happy!" A sweet thought. Innocent enough. Coming from a pure-intentioned heart — and derived from the fundamental darkness of illusion. The land of ignorance. Go away! Now! "But why? Why does the world have to be like this?" Nam-myoho-renge-kyo! Must strengthen my life to deal with this reality.

Eyes beginning to open. Tamara Jenkins is a Buddha. Tamara Jenkins is a Buddha. I must form a new identity, pouring through the Goshō page by page. Hold on to Nichiren.

Next day, awakened in the middle of the night from a terror. Sinking. Hysteria knocking at my door again! Go away! Go away! By now, lungs are fine, but the chest is on fire! Next night, my head is on fire. I am a Buddha! I am a Buddha!

Medications have run their course, leaving my fragile body racked. Only the detox and healing remains. The sun comes out for the first time in days. A quote in the *World Tribune*: "I am ready to truly trust the Gohonzon with the most fragile aspects of my life." Bingo. That's where I am. All these tears. Tears of sweet *amrita* — running like a crystal stream down the mountain of that impossible dream as it becomes possible. Day by day, taking my true self back to eternity. Replenishing, restoring, healing, revealing. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The summit beckons. And the ascent continues.

WT

Title: Perspective: Turning Point

Subject: World Tribune 10/31/97 n.3163 p.3 WT971031p03 New York, New York

Author: Tamara Jenkins

Keywords: December Experiences Health July Opinion Perspectives Point Tribune Turning World York