

## EDITORIAL: Trying To Be One Who Can Forbear

By LISA JONES

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I'm a verbal person, I suppose. Some people — my mother, specifically — claim that I have a knack for saying the right thing in the right way. She's also quick to remind me that my words can cut and blister, even if what I'm saying is true.

Once, while talking with a friend who tends to echo my mother's wisdom, I was about to make a trenchant remark about an annoying situation. Before I could say anything, though, he said, "To lead people to the truth without ever saying or implying that they are wrong is one of the meanings of forbearance."

It occurred to me that I didn't understand forbearance. I always thought that *to forbear* meant to endure. But in addition to endure and tolerate, *Webster's New World College Dictionary* offers the meanings "self-control; patient restraint...to keep oneself in check; control oneself under provocation."

From a Buddhist view, forbearance can mean to bear up patiently under all opposition and hardships that arise to obstruct our Buddhist practice.

As SGI President Ikeda says, "In an age that has lost sight of humanity, it is no easy undertaking to campaign for a restoration of humanity." For this reason, difficulties and outright attacks are in store for people who practice Buddhism.

Therefore, in our practice we strive — as Shakyamuni Buddha says in the Lotus Sutra — to clothe ourselves in the "robe of gentleness and forbearance." This robe implies inner fortitude and so much patience that we're impervious to the malice of others. Hurtful words, then, don't enter our hearts; rather, they return to the people who spoke them, causing them to suffer.

The point, though, is not to make mean people suffer. Forbearance is based on the conviction that we can endure any difficulty if we are determined to shoulder and transform all the suffering of this world. In other words, forbearance is rooted in compassion. When viewed as integral to our compassionate mission, no hardship is unbearable.

Further, Nichiren Daishonin writes that "Shakyamuni Buddha entered this *saha* world of ours with the title *Nonin*, 'He Who Can Forbear.' He is so called because he does not berate its people for the slanders they all commit but shows forbearance toward them" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 4, p. 68). "This *saha* world" generally means the ordinary world in which we live, and in which we all endure suffering.

Both Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin were forthright in pointing out incorrect views and challenging authoritarianism. Yet they were both teachers. They knew that to berate people for their slanders and missteps usually fosters resentment or hopelessness rather than understanding.

It seems to me, then, that forbearance involves wisdom: knowing when to speak out eloquently for the sake of truth and to condemn evil — and when to exercise self-restraint and withhold judgment.

In the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," the Daishonin writes: "The exercise of the great power of forbearance by the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching in proclaiming and propagating Myoho-renge-kyo is known as *saha*. Forbearance means the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. This mind of forbearance is called Shakyamuni Buddha" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 771).

Forbearance is one of the qualities of the Buddha. To me, this means that I can develop my own power of forbearance by coming to understand the Buddha nature that I and all others possess.

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It has been said that the battle for kosen-rufu is waged through the written and spoken word. Based on the principle of forbearance, I feel that words wisely left unspoken are just as important.

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