

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

A Lifeline

I've been chanting since the spring of 1975. I am 250 miles from other members in Lincoln and Omaha. *Living Buddhism* and the *World Tribune* are a lifeline to my practice. I read them from cover to cover. Thanks for your continued inspiration.

— PHILIP MEDCALF Ainsworth, Neb.

An Omission Regarding China?

I am writing in regards to the March 19 *World Tribune* article titled "Forgetting Is the Easy Way Out." I am puzzled how after dealing with the Jewish Holocaust of World War II, China is then brought up without any mention of the 1.2 million people (nearly 1/4 of the population) who have already been killed in Tibet, the destruction of almost all the 6,000 monasteries there, and the Chinese population transfer program that threatens to complete the annihilation of the Tibetan people. Could you please explain this omission and the SGI's stance on the Tibetan situation?

— JESS CONVERSE
Bound Brook, N.J.

Editor's response: The article from the March 19 *World Tribune* you referred to in your letter is a speech given by SGI President Ikeda earlier this year. The subject of his address was individual people who have displayed admirable human qualities that can serve as an example to all. In this speech "Forgetting Is the Easy Way Out," he covered two main topics: his personal relationship with Premier Zhou Enlai and the premier's wife, Deng Yingchao of China; and the life of Dr. Simon Wiesenthal, founder of the center named after him in Los Angeles.

President Ikeda and all SGI members object to the killing in Tibet and elsewhere. Nichiren Dai-shonin's Buddhism and the SGI uphold the sanctity of human life above all else. This speech, however, was not addressing policies of the Chinese government. President Ikeda, as a private citizen, conducts his efforts for peace, culture and education in a person-to-person manner. For instance, if you are familiar with his series of articles titled "Recollections" that have appeared in *Living Buddhism*, you are aware of his impressions of many statesmen, artists and educators around the world. In each case, there is a lesson in human behavior that can illuminate the great potential within us all. This is his purpose in the speech in the March 19 *World Tribune*.

Please read his annual peace proposals that he submits to the United Nations. The 1999 proposal will appear in the May issue of *Living Buddhism*.

Thoughts on Ceremony

Thanks to Liz Carter (Feb. 12 *World Tribune*) for voicing some of my concerns. Apparently she and I read the same training materials and were both guided by caring leaders who helped set up our altars and corrected details in our gongyo, thereby increasing our appreciation for the depth of this practice.

I treasure the consistency of bell, book, candle and greens, but am not a slave to these guidelines. Sometimes my candles are green, sometimes red. I have a living plant by the

side of my altar and my candlesticks and incense burner are crystal.

I think the thing that centers me and focuses my attention is the consistency of ceremony that creates a foundation from which I can concentrate on my prayers. I'm pretty fanatical about keeping my altar cleaned and polished, no candle wax dripping, etc. I ring the bell in the pattern I was taught.

For some time I've been quietly grinding my teeth as one of our leaders chants "Nan-myoho-rence-kyod" and stymied about what action to take. Does no one else hear this? Am I being too picky?

I've chosen to ignore my sensitivities and concentrate on my own practice. But I am concerned for guests and new members. Relaxing the rigidity of our practice doesn't mean letting it go to hell in a hand basket. The ceremonial aspects of our Buddhism have meaning and serve many purposes, yet still allow us to practice in a manner most meaningful to our individual personalities.

— BETSY BELL RINGER,
Richmond, Calif.

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