

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

New Year's Poem

I greatly enjoyed reading President Ikeda's New Year's poem in the *World Tribune*. As a man I was forced to reflect on what he meant by saying that the "culture of peace" means "Moving from patriarchy to an age of women." Throughout human history the male dominated social order has created war, violence, oppression, greed, poverty and discrimination. Men often have and do mistake aggression and domination for courage and what it means "to be a man." Women on the other hand have a deeper kind of courage, one that is tempered with a compassion far deeper than THAT OF most men. I think what this line means to me is not just that women will need to increasingly take leading roles in society toward creating a peaceful and just world, as they do in the SGI, but that men need to learn so much from women how to redefine and develop such things as "true courage," "interdependence," dialogue" and "compassion."

—RAY GUTOSKI, Long Island, New York
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Use of the Passive Voice

Thank you to David McGirr for his letter (Feb. 11 *World Tribune*) regarding use of the passive voice. I spent the first eight years of my practice waiting for my prayers to be answered. Equating "mystical" with "magical," I waited to "have my wishes fulfilled." The culture festival in New York City in 1996 shattered this belief. I have spent the past four years rebuilding my practice, piece by piece. My daimoku is truly becoming the wind that fills the sails of the boat of my life—the boat that I have built with my own two hands.

—PATRICK SMITH, New York City
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In response to the insightful letter of David McGirr, "Use of the passive voice" (Feb. 11 *World Tribune*), I wish to share one interpretation of encultured behavioral patterns that could create the mistaken notion that Buddhism is promulgating magical formulas that supersede individual initiative.

In his essay "Japanese Buddhism and the American Renaissance," (*The Journal of Oriental Studies*, 1993), David Norton cites Frederick Nietzsche in his criticism of Western religious dualism as a "betrayal of one's species," whereby the fullest expression of creation is found in a supernatural world that is the antithesis of the human being (p. 22). To accept the supernatural entails the rejection of the natural propensities to be responsible for recognizing and actualizing possibilities of value within oneself (p. 22). The outcome of this deep-seated ambivalence of human beings toward themselves is the foothold for the self-hatred and self-doubt that plague our culture in general.

In our search for greater clarity and effective action, I believe it is fitting to repudiate the role that Nichiren Shoshu played in the obfuscation of "healthy growth" ideals by their arcane, unintelligible lectures and precepts of abject discipleship that suppressed inquiry and dialogue. They exploited our cultural failings for their own self-serving interests and

continue to do so.

—STEVE MOON, Studio City, Calif.

Chinese Adoptions

Thank you for printing such an encouraging experience about Pat Keating and Lynda Martinez and their Chinese adoptions (Feb. 11 *World Tribune*). My husband and I are also adopting from China. I'd love to hear some of their guidance on how to get through the horrible, long, seemingly endless months of waiting. I have been practicing 13 years, and trying to become a "mom" for 15 years at least. Any help you could give me in contacting these ladies would be appreciated.

—KATHRYN McQUAID, Ipswich, Mass.
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Thanks, Michael Lisagor

I just finished reading Michael Lisagor's excellent (though the title reads "Good") explanation of the five silent prayers (Feb. 4 *World Tribune*). Thank you! It is the best explanation I have received since being introduced to this Buddhism in 1994. I have not received my own Gohonzon yet, largely due to my own doubt and questions of its necessity. My friend who introduced me to this practice had given me a gift subscription to the *World Tribune* for my birthday last October and faithfully encourages me to continue my studies (and my own human revolution). The article helped answer some of my questions and I felt compelled to thank Michael Lisagor personally by e-mailing him for sharing it. Isn't e-mail wonderful? It really reflects the small, interconnected world in which we live. Sincerely,

—CARLA CANNINGTON, Palmdale, Calif.
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Enjoyed Michael Lisagor's long overdue article (Feb. 4 *World Tribune*) on the five silent prayers. Been a member for more than 25 years and have been stumped by its meaning or even uneasy reading it perhaps because of its language sounding almost heretical in nature. Also liked his humorous style of presenting it. Do write more such articles.

—FRANK from Hawaii,
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About Depression

It was good to see the Perspective by Lori McDaniel, "Using Common Sense in Facing Depression" (Jan. 28 *World Tribune*). Lori and I used to work hard together on the Internet to refute slanderous postings by temple supporters.

Thank you, Lori, but I must tell you that your article triggers defensiveness in me. You seem to be telling the likes of me that I have to use a certain type of therapy and medication to treat what has in the past been inappropriately labeled "depression" in my life and likewise misdiagnosed and mistreated as such. It is an act which I consider emotionally violent to suggest that I return to the horrors of psychiatric treatment.

Let me just ask some questions: Is there a drug that can stop me from committing

onshitsu (harboring ill feelings toward fellow believers)? Is there a drug that can enable me to accept that I have no control over what other people do? One which enables me to, as Ozzy Osborne's song, "Crazy Train," says, ..."learn how to love / and forget how to hate?" A medicine that enables me to chant for the happiness of those who have done me wrong, rather than feeling so angry and frustrated because I cannot do so? Is there a drug that can prevent me from being discouraged by the criticisms I am sure to draw in response to this letter?

Is there a drug that can enable me to forgive? One that enables me to have the patience with therapists that you insist I need to have, when I have problems that I need so desperately to settle now? Can treatment prevent people from committing suicide in spite of the fact that Ernest Hemmingway and many others have taken their own lives even though they were undergoing therapy? Are there effective treatments that are inexpensive enough that low-income and homeless people who need them the most can afford them? Can a prescription substance enable me to better focus on the Gohonzon and pronounce gongyo more clearly? Can one elevate my life-condition so that these things do not irritate me and consequently upset me so bad? Can a drug bring me joy? Change my deeply rooted negative karma? Can a psychiatrist enable Buddhahood to emerge within my life?

These questions could go on forever. Either the answer to every last one of them is "yes" or else it is pretty obvious that there are a lot of problems in my life that no drug can alleviate.

— STU CLARKE, Taos, N.M.

Challenging Anti-Environmental Myths

Although *World Tribune* readers enjoyed the debate on Frank Hotchkiss' perspective about the environment (Oct. 1, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 2) the past several months, I must point out that there is an important fact missing. I found that the majority of his quotes, statistics and logic came from the book, *A Moment on the Earth—The Coming Age of Environmental Optimism*, by an environmental journalist, Gregg Easterbrook, who writes for *Newsweek*.

The basic premise of this book is that most environmental problems either don't exist or would soon disappear if environmentalists would just stop exaggerating. This philosophical mindset is very destructive. Easterbrook calls this new way of thinking Ecorealism. However, if you read this book, you would find many frustrating, false statements denying the environmental problems we face. Denying human contribution to global warming in Hotchkiss' article is just one example of Easterbrook's false statements.

For complete refutation of his book, please refer to the book, *Betrayal of Science and Reason—How Anti-Environmental Rhetoric Threatens Our Future*, by Dr. Paul R. Ehrlich, of Stanford University.

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