

WORLD TRIBUNE MAILBOX

Renewed Sense of Mission

I was deeply affected by SGI North American Bureau Director Norimasa Saito's guidance in the Dec. 10, 1999, *World Tribune* issue. That particular time of year, people seem to be more involved with relatives and shopping for friends and loved ones than soaking up guidance. I am no exception. In retrospect, I was chanting for a "theme" for our Paradise Group Meeting when I read the article. I was blown away by his directness, sincerity and honesty. If myoho means in part "to open," Mr. Saito's guidance did just that. It lit up my life. He just kept hitting the nail on the head over and over about goals, achieving major breakthroughs in life, and the point that the Daishonin did not establish the Gohonzon simply so we can wear nice clothes, live in a fabulous house or drive a fancy car. We have to have a higher sense of purpose. Mr. Saito goes on into relationships, the temple issue, and the mentor-disciple relationship. I have a renewed sense of mission!

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Regarding Depression

While no one person has all the answers on handling the problem of depression, I would like to share my experience with overcoming it. After practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for almost 15 years, I finally summoned up the courage to chant to get to the bottom of whatever my anxiety/depression problem was and RESOLVE it. Amazingly, shortly thereafter, my brother called me from California and told me of breakthroughs he'd had with a similar problem caused by a chemical imbalance. He also suggested it may run in our family and that anti-depressants may be helpful to me.

Based on Buddhist wisdom, I urged my therapist to refer me to someone who could treat my problem chemically. It worked! Since becoming "chemically balanced," I now feel like my old self from 25 years ago and am able to face my problems with an optimistic attitude. Within one year of finding the correct medication (and continuing to strengthen my faith, practice and study), I ended an unhappy marriage, (my ex and I are now the best of friends), moved from D.C. to New York City, changed jobs three times and living quarters twice (always to a better situation), and currently live in a place that I love and look forward to going to a pleasant work environment every day.

I now have the energy to work a weekend job also, as well as to exercise daily and make efforts to support my district through home visits, and by communicating via phone, e-mail and "snail" mail. Additionally, my father passed away suddenly about a month ago and although saddened, I was able to strengthen my faith EVEN MORE and encourage the mourners at my dad's funeral. (Some remarked it was the most ENCOURAGING funeral they had ever been to.)

Instead of feeling guilt-ridden and alternating between blaming myself or others, I now feel like a person who is showing actual proof of the power of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism by taking responsibility to improve my mental health and my life. I am not

advocating taking anti-depressants as a cure-all; in my case, finding the CORRECT anti-depressant has been a TREMENDOUS BENEFIT and that I am able to make a greater contribution toward world peace by coupling the correct medication with correct practice.

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Use of Language

I did not think that I would ever be in the position to disagree with Dave Baldschun, whom I deeply respect and admire, but I must take exception to one aspect of his “Perspective” column in the March 17 *World Tribune*. Mr. Baldschun writes “There is no book in English called the Goshō. It was translated to *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, which contain his letters and theses.”

While I agree that many Buddhist terms need to be translated from Japanese, I deeply believe we should continue using the word *Goshō*. After all, Goshō is the name the second High Priest Nikko gave to the Daishonin’s writings, and if we are to look at the holy books of the major religions of our time, we find that they all have a two-syllable word to describe them: Bible, Koran or Quran, Talmud, Vedas. There might even be a mystic reason why humans choose two-syllable words to describe their holy books. The Bible could be further translated as “The teachings of Christianity and Jesus,” but it is not. I don’t believe we should change the title of *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* to *The Goshō of Nichiren Dai-shonin*, I just believe that the word Goshō should not be replaced. Once every two months, we have a Goshō study at the community center here in Memphis. That’s easy to remember and easy to write on the calendar. Having a lecture on the writings of Nichiren Daishonin might be more complete, but it sure is a mouthful. So, for whatever it’s worth, my vote goes to keep the word *Goshō*, even though I agree with every other point Mr. Baldschun makes in his exceptional article, I just felt strongly about this and had to write.

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In response to Dave Baldschun’s Perspective (March 17 *World Tribune*) about the need to convey Japanese words in plain English in our organizational jargon, I believe that substituting English for some Japanese words would only serve to weaken our connection to Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

All languages in the world continually undergo a process of universality, changing every 5 to 10 years. New words constantly come up in our speech, such as hippy, disco, etc. Buddhism holds that everything is in a constant state of flux. So is language. The addition of foreign words enriches our language. Besides, the American lexicon consists of a combination of languages that came through our multicultural heritage. Many familiar words have foreign origins, e.g., memoir, banquet (French); deportation, deposit, depression, genius (Latin); lexicon, symphony, micro, melody (Greek); opera, ghetto (Italian); altruism (combination of French and Latin); and slalom (Norwegian).

For the past 50 years, words formerly reserved for professional use have been absorbed

into everyday language, e.g., email, telemarketing, laser, computer bookmark, etc. We cannot stop the process. No one language can exist in isolation. The prime characteristic of a living civilization is the vitality of its language. Openness is a sign of a healthy nation. This Buddhist principle applies to the progress of any language, individual, country or organization.

In the last century, members of the Russian aristocracy spoke French exclusively, to separate themselves from ordinary people, the peasants. You know the end! Now, the nobility is extinct—while the Russian language contains more than 20,000 foreign words. Obviously we need to use common sense when using foreign words, not allowing them to dominate or abuse our language. Still, doesn't Dave Baldschun contradict himself by using words like jargon (French) or mimic (Greek)?

He also states: "There is no book in English called *The Gosho*." It is a term for "writing" in Japan. It was the same with the word *saga* when the English writer John Galsworthy published his masterpiece, using an ancient Scandinavian name in the title. Even though in plain English he could have translated it as "story" or "novel," using this "foreign" word increased the popularity of his book, *The Forsythe Saga*.

Using the Japanese word Gosho (not to be confused with "saga") to refer to the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, who was, after all, Japanese, shows appreciation and gratitude. Similarly, the word *Sensei* shows respect for President Ikeda. In the 20th century, only presidents Makiguchi and Toda shared this specific use of the term *Sensei* in recognition of their enormous efforts to propagate Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Some day, these terms may become anachronisms, but with the wisdom we gain through practice, we can gain understanding of the profound meaning behind words like *shakubuku*, *toso*, *gongyo* or *Soka Gakkai*. What riches they add to our cultural heritage!

—TANYA KIVISTO,
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