

## FROM OUR READERS

Due to the volume of letters we receive, not all can be printed, and all are subject to condensation. Letters printed here do not necessarily reflect the views of SGI-USA or 'Living Buddhism.' Please include signature, mailing address and telephone number with all correspondence. Mail to: Letters, Living Buddhism, 606 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401 or e-mail: livingb1@aol.com

### NEWS JUNKIE

I hope that in "Seeing the World Through the Eyes of the Buddha" (February), Geoff Rohde is not encouraging Buddhists to stick their heads in the sand when he says: "If being a news junkie makes us and our cheerful practice of Buddhism ill, why continue to watch, read or listen to so much news? ... The news — the immense misery afflicting the human race — can also obstruct our happiness."

Geoff's point, it seems to me, is that we should not allow ourselves to despair at bad news. I do not disagree. At the same time, shutting our eyes and ears to misery is hardly a Buddhist approach.

When Shakyamuni Buddha was a young prince, his parents did everything they could to shield their son from misery. Despite this artificial "information bubble," the prince eventually encountered people who were suffering. These encounters inspired him to leave princely life and discover a way to relieve all human misery. Thus, the path of Buddhism began.

Thanks to the ubiquity of news and information, we can't (and don't) live in a cheery bubble, insulated from human misery. While it may seem that we can do nothing for those who are suffering on the other side of the planet, we can listen and care — and that's doing a lot.

The Lotus Sutra describes The Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World's Sounds. This bodhisattva hears the pleas and cries of immeasurable millions of beings undergoing various trials and suffering. When they cry out, this bodhisattva immediately renders aid.

*Lisa Jones, West Hollywood, California*

### GOOD FRIENDS

I thoroughly enjoyed the January issue article, "Good Friends and Bad Friends." However, there are a couple of things I thought were left out or not emphasized enough.

First, I think it should have been made clear explicitly that the difference between a good and bad friend lies within us. A person isn't a good or bad friend based on his or her actions, but on our response. If Devadatta had managed to silence the Buddha, or Hei-no Saemon had actually discouraged the Daishonin, they would have been bad friends. However, they became good friends due to the effect they had on the Shakyamuni and the Daishonin.

Second, I think it should have been noted that, the temple issue has functioned as a "good friend" for us. Think about it: High Priest Nikken Abe severed the ties between the SGI and a shallow, self-serving priesthood that was holding us back from accomplishing kosen-rufu. This was something *we* couldn't do, because we had committed ourselves to support the priesthood, no matter what. Also, he has shown us proof of the validity of our movement, in the form of the

most powerful of the three powerful enemies. Lastly, he's challenged us to develop our practice and show actual proof. After all, as we are taught, only by defeating a powerful enemy can one show his or her true potential. Therefore, even as I oppose High Priest Nikken and his destructive and divisive actions with my life, I'm also aware of the meaning of the Daishonin's statement, "I am grateful when I think that without [him] I could not have proved myself to be the votary of the Lotus Sutra" (WND, 770).

*Robert Webster, Auburn, Washington*