

# A Revolution Dawns



A Brief History of Soka Spirit

**Nichiren Daishonin states:**

**“When truth and error stand shoulder to shoulder, and dispute which is superior.... At such a time, one must set aside all other affairs and devote one’s attention to rebuking slander of the correct teaching. This is the practice of shakubuku.”**

*(The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 126)*

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOKA SPIRIT



Prepared by the SGI-USA Soka Spirit Committee

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## For More Information

The history and concepts relating to Soka Spirit are explored in *Spiritual Independence — An Introduction to Soka Spirit*, *The Untold History of the Fuji School* and *Buddhism In a New Light*. Further information on the Buddhist principles covered in this pamphlet can be found in *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vols. 1–6, and *The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Writings*, vols. 1–4. These books and more are available at SGI-USA bookstores or our online bookstore at [www.sgi-usa.org](http://www.sgi-usa.org). Also, visit the Soka Spirit Website at [www.sokaspirit.org](http://www.sokaspirit.org) and check out the archives and free downloads.

Portions of this pamphlet were adapted from *The Untold History of the Fuji School*.

The citations most commonly used in this publication have been abbreviated as follows:

WND-1 refers to *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, volume 1 (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1999); LSOC refers to *The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras* (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2009); GZ refers to the Japanese language collection of *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*.

## Introduction

# Defeating the Enemy Within, Vanquishing the Enemy Without

*“There will be many ignorant people who will curse and speak ill of us. In that evil age there will be monks with perverse wisdom and hearts that are fawning and crooked.” (The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras, p. 232).*

Buddhism is the ultimate practice and philosophy for transforming our lives for the better. It therefore deals with the core impulses that can either assist or hinder the attainment of absolute happiness.

Buddhism recognizes arrogance as a prominent characteristic that impedes our progress, and compassion for the welfare of others as a positive force for our own well-being. One originates in fundamental darkness, the other in fundamental enlightenment. Buddhism recognizes the tension between the two as a reality of life. It is a conflict chronicled in the teachings and history of Buddhism.

Shakyamuni Buddha taught that in the fifth five-hundred-year period after his death, in the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law, three types of arrogant people would persecute those who propagate the Lotus Sutra (in other words, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo). Called the three powerful enemies, they are: (1) arrogant lay people; (2) arrogant priests; and (3) arrogant false sages. This third category is described as priests who pretend to be sages and who are revered as such but, when encountering the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra, become fearful of losing fame or profit and induce secular authorities to persecute them.

It is the very purpose of Buddhist practice to subdue arrogant, egocentric tendencies and awaken people to a higher purpose and enlightened state of life. These tendencies of the lesser self can function as obstacles or hindrances to the practice and propagation of the Law.

In his dialogue with SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, historian Arnold Toynbee observes: “All the great religions and philosophies

declare that the proper goal for every living creature is to subdue and extinguish its natural self-centeredness—to die unto itself. They also declare unanimously that this effort is difficult, because it is contrary to nature, but that it is, at the same time, the only true way of self-fulfillment and, therefore, the only true way of attaining self-satisfaction and happiness” (*Choose Life*, p. 11).

Buddhism provides the means to achieve this ideal. Consequently, opposing forces predictably arise within the human heart and society itself to block this effort. When the power of great good arises to banish evil, great evil will resist being displaced.

Buddhism describes these dark forces in many ways, including the

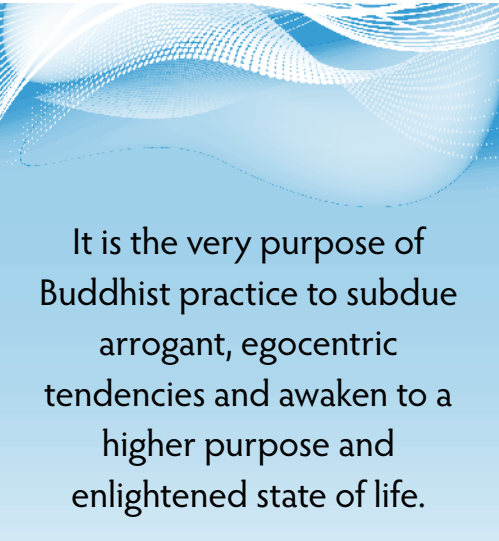
three powerful enemies, the devil king of the sixth heaven, the three obstacles and four devils or the devil Mara. Rather than actual entities, they are analogies for compulsions and behaviors. (See glossary.)

In *The Hope-Filled Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, President Ikeda explains:

“Nichiren states that the *saha* world in which we dwell is a domain ruled by the devil king. This human world—shaped by the functions of our desires, physical actions and spiritual and intellectual pursuits—is subject to an endless cycle of suffer-

ing stemming from fundamental darkness, and can therefore be considered as the domain of the devil king.

“What does the devil king abhor most of all? It is the possibility that the Buddha’s forces could multiply and take over his realm. When a votary of the Mystic Law, the correct teaching of Buddhism, attains enlightenment, it doesn’t just stop there; that person invariably leads many others to free themselves from the fetters of the devil king as well. So the devil king summons all his underlings and commands them to do everything in their power to harass that votary” (p. 173).



It is the very purpose of Buddhist practice to subdue arrogant, egocentric tendencies and awaken to a higher purpose and enlightened state of life.

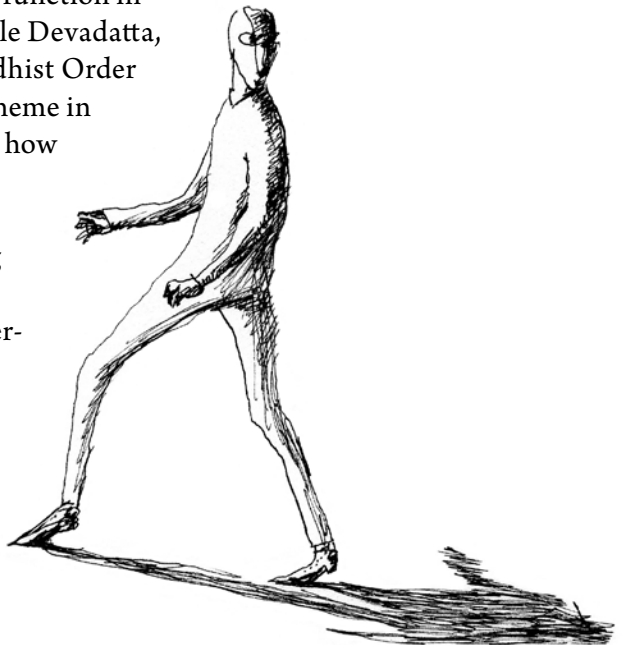
## The Battle Between the Buddha and the Devil

The conflict between the Buddha's forces of good and the devil's forces of evil is found at the very origin of Buddhism nearly 2,500 years ago in India. When Shakyamuni entered into meditation under the bodhi tree, Mara attempted to prevent him from attaining enlightenment but failed. After Shakyamuni's enlightenment, Mara also tried to induce the Buddha to abandon his intent to preach. In other words, this devilish function appears to prevent our individual happiness and the propagation of a teaching that will lead others to happiness.

Mara is identified with the devil king of the sixth heaven. The sixth heaven is the highest heaven in the world of desire, or the Heaven of Freely Enjoying Things Conjured by Others, and its ruler delights in manipulating others to submit to his will. In Buddhism, devils indicate those functions that block or hinder people's efforts to complete their Buddhist practice, including propagating the teachings. In the case of Shakyamuni, it was a struggle that occurred within the depths of his life.

Later, he would face a devilish function in the person of his cousin and disciple Devadatta, who attempted to disrupt the Buddhist Order and kill the Buddha. A recurring theme in Buddhist history is that, no matter how virtuous people may appear to be, if their motivation is selfish, they will only cause disunity, hindering the propagation of the teachings. Shakyamuni recognized the dangerous egotism in his cousin's actions and publicly reprimanded Devadatta for his arrogance.

The historical Devadatta became a symbolic figure in later Buddhist writings, representing the destructive and arrogant potential in all people.



## Five Senior Priests Betray Nichiren Daishonin

When Nichiren Daishonin appeared in Japan during the thirteenth century and established the correct Buddhist teaching for the Latter Day of the Law, he faced devilish forces in the form of persecution by governmental and religious authorities. Immediately after Nichiren's passing, five of the six senior priests he chose to protect his teachings succumbed to their own self-centered tendencies and betrayed him and his teachings. Only Nikko Shonin remained true to the Daishonin's teachings.

After the Soka Gakkai was founded in 1930 by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda and began propagation activities, the founders were persecuted by the militarist government, betrayed by the priesthood and put in prison. First president Makiguchi died in prison. Second president Toda was released from prison in ill health and engaged these same negative functions as he strove to rebuild the Soka Gakkai and initiate a new era of kosen-rufu. As the Soka Gakkai continued to grow under third president Ikeda, devilish forces continued to appear.

In recent times, the predictable appearance of these forces occurred within the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, culminating in the so-called excommunication in 1991 of 10 million SGI members around the world.

In this pamphlet, we briefly recount the common thread of the arrogance and jealousy of those who function to block the propagation of the Buddha's teachings and distort those teachings for their own gain. It is the story of how the SGI has fulfilled the Buddha's prophecy to widely propagate the Law despite forces that oppose that effort. Two of President Ikeda's essays are included.

President Ikeda explains: "The spiritual battle between good and evil in each person's heart will become an increasingly important issue for humanity. To change human destiny, we of the SGI have initiated a struggle to defeat ignorance and cultivate the inherent goodness in all people" (*The World of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism*, vol. 4, p. 131).



## Chapter One

### KEY POINTS

#### Shakyamuni and Devadatta—Good and Evil

*After Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment in India around 2,500 years ago, he began teaching others what he had realized, and the first Buddhist Order was founded. Among the many disciples who followed the Buddha was his cousin Devadatta. Eventually, Devadatta succumbed to his own weakness, and he turned against Shakyamuni. These are the highlights of his tale.*

- Devadatta was a man of supreme evil, who conspired to take Shakyamuni's life and divide the Buddhist order. This was due to arrogance and jealousy.
- Devadatta committed the three cardinal sins.
  - 1) Causing disunity in the Buddhist Order. (He deceived 500 disciples into leaving the Buddhist Order.)
  - 2) Injuring the Buddha. (He rolled a huge boulder down on Shakyamuni, drawing blood.)
  - 3) Killing an arhat or member of the Order. (Devadatta had the nun Utpalavarna beaten to death.)
- The Devadatta chapter explains the relationship between Shakyamuni and Devadatta in the past. When Shakyamuni was the king in a past existence, he resigned the throne and served a seer named Asita, attaining enlightenment. Devadatta is an incarnation of Asita.
- The Devadatta chapter expounds the “enlightenment of evil persons” through the victory of “Shakyamuni's good.”
- It is expounded that Shakyamuni was able to attain enlightenment and save living beings because of his “good friend” Devadatta. Therefore, although Devadatta fell into the state of hell, Shakyamuni predicted that he would attain enlightenment in the distant future as



a Buddha named Heavenly King. Shakyamuni was able to triumph as a Buddha because of Devadatta's appearance.

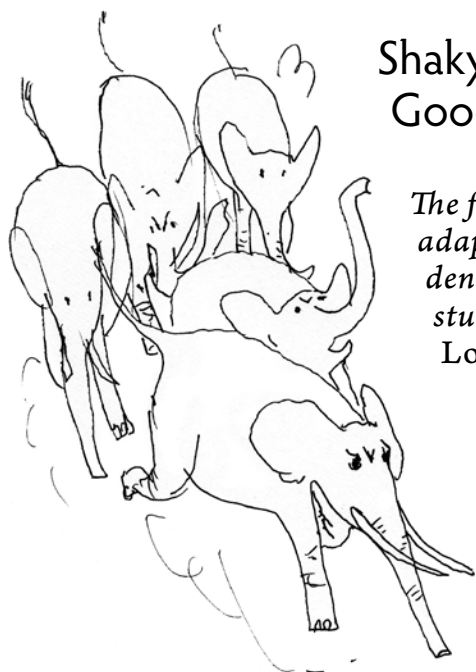
▶ Because Shakyamuni won in his struggle against Devadatta, Devadatta's "evil" helped prove the power of Shakyamuni's "good" and Devadatta became a "good friend" in Shakyamuni's victory. On the other hand, if Devadatta had won in this struggle, then it certainly would not have been possible to say that Devadatta had become a "good friend."

▶ If evil functions to reveal ultimate good, then the function of evil becomes good. This is the oneness of good and evil. However, evil cannot turn into good if we simply allow it to run its course. The oneness of good and evil is realized only when we thoroughly challenge and conquer evil.

▶ The "enlightenment of evil people" presented in the Devadatta chapter is proof of the victory of great good by Shakyamuni. Because of this victory, the Devadatta chapter was born and the enlightenment of all living beings was expounded.

## Shakyamuni and Devadatta— Good and Evil

*The following story of Devadatta's betrayal is adapted from a dialogue between SGI President Ikeda and leaders of the Soka Gakkai study department in The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra, Vol. III, "Devadatta Chapter."*



In an attempt to kill Shakyamuni Buddha, one of his top disciples, Devadatta, sent assassins to set loose wild elephants upon

him, and, finally, rolled a huge boulder down upon him, injuring the Buddha, but failing again to kill him.

Unlike persecutions coming from without, this incident arose from within the Buddhist community. It was all the more serious because the traitor had conspired with the ruler of the land, King Ajatashatru, to do away with Shakyamuni.

And yet, the “Devadatta” (12th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra explains that even this great scoundrel will attain Buddhahood. On the face of it, this seems a most peculiar contradiction.

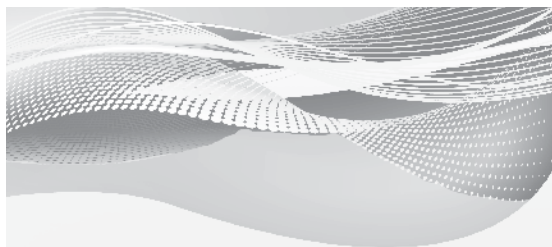
Devadatta is thought to have been younger than Shakyamuni, and to have renounced secular life about 15 years after Shakyamuni attained enlightenment. At first, Devadatta earnestly exerted himself in his Buddhist practice as a disciple of Shakyamuni. And because of his talent and ability, he gradually gained distinction in the Buddhist Order. Later, however, it is related that he approached King Ajatashatru in order to gain backing, and came to harbor the ambition of trying to replace Shakyamuni as the head of the order.

It would appear that Devadatta was quite intelligent. Nichiren says that he had “committed to memory... eighty thousand jeweled teachings” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 342). That may be why he grew arrogant.

## The Buddha's Cousin Seeks to Replace Him

When Shakyamuni was advanced in years, Devadatta approached him with the request that the Buddha turn over control of the Buddhist order to Devadatta. The reason he gave was Shakyamuni's age. It is said that even though Shakyamuni immediately refused, Devadatta repeated his demand three times.

Shakyamuni rebuked him to his face, calling him “a fool who licks the spit of others” (WND-1, 245), referring to the fact that he had put himself under the protection of Ajatashatru. Outraged, Devadatta left the order. Shakyamuni immediately instructed his disciples to spread the word that Devadatta was harboring evil intentions, so as to prevent even one person from being led astray by him. An evil person has to be clearly identified as evil. If measures to deal with such a person are halfhearted, many may be confused.



An evil person has to be clearly identified as evil. If measures to deal with such a person are halfhearted, many may be confused.

The reason Shakyamuni scolded Devadatta in front of others was so they would thoroughly understand what was at stake. Devadatta's reaction is said to have been one of profound humiliation at having been put to shame in front of others. He no longer possessed the humble spirit of a student-disciple. His petty pride outstripped his seeking spirit.

It may be that in private Shakyamuni had previously warned Devadatta and that he only took the step of a public reprimand because Devadatta had not heeded the Bud-

dha's earlier warnings.

Thereafter, Devadatta, having resolved to turn against Shakyamuni, incited Ajatashatru to kill his own father, King Bimbisara, and assume the throne. Then, availing himself of King Ajatashatru's power, Devadatta devised all kinds of schemes to kill Shakyamuni. All of these attempts failed.

### Five Hundred of the Buddha's Disciples Deceived

Devadatta also plotted to destroy the *sangha*, or community of Buddhist believers. On the one hand, he tried to kill his mentor; on the other, he tried to undermine Shakyamuni's bond with his disciples. In terms of precepts, Devadatta advocated monastic rules even stricter than those upheld in Shakyamuni's order, and so tried to make himself appear superior to the Buddha.

In fact, five hundred of the Buddha's disciples were deceived by Devadatta's words and became his followers. But most of them later returned to Shakyamuni after Shariputra and Maudgalyayana, two of Shakyamuni's senior disciples, reasoned with them.

The strict precepts proposed by Devadatta must have sounded good. Indeed they were so austere that Shakyamuni might have

seemed decadent by comparison.

That was probably Devadatta's intention. An evil person definitely does not present a face that says, "I am evil." Rather the person will use evil wisdom and cunning to make him or herself appear otherwise. At a time when many people were carrying out extreme practices, it would have been easy to criticize Shakyamuni's practice of the Middle Way as lacking strictness.

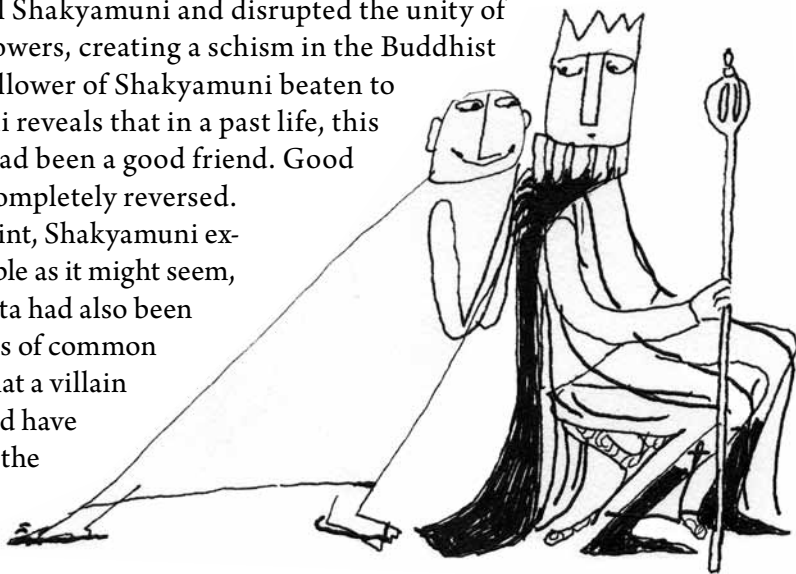
In short, Devadatta desperately wanted to be respected more highly than Shakyamuni. He was motivated by jealousy; and it was for this reason that he thought up his extreme precepts.

Devadatta saw only that Shakyamuni was widely respected; he did not attempt to understand Shakyamuni's spirit. How Shakyamuni, unbeknownst to others, must have agonized day and night over the question of how to lead people to happiness and make them aware of the treasure of their own lives!

Why couldn't he see this? Most likely it's because he himself had given up his own internal struggle. If we perceive our "inner evil" but neglect making efforts to conquer it, then our lives are stained with evil. In that sense, a "good person" is someone who struggles against evil. By fighting the evil around us, we eradicate the evil within our lives and so purify them.

For Shakyamuni at the time, Devadatta was an "evil friend." He had tried to kill Shakyamuni and disrupted the unity of Shakyamuni's followers, creating a schism in the Buddhist order, and had a follower of Shakyamuni beaten to death. Shakyamuni reveals that in a past life, this man of great evil had been a good friend. Good and evil are thus completely reversed.

More to the point, Shakyamuni explains that, incredible as it might seem, in the past Devadatta had also been his teacher. In terms of common sense, the notion that a villain like Devadatta could have been the teacher of the Buddha is virtually unthinkable.



## There is No Good in Isolation from Evil

The line in the “Devadatta” chapter where Shakyamuni explains his attaining Buddhahood, “The fact that I have attained impartial and correct enlightenment and can save living beings on a broad scale is all due to Devadatta, who was a good friend” (LSOC, 223), seems to offer a clue. In other words, had it not been for Devadatta, then even Shakyamuni could not have become a Buddha.

The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China says in the fifth volume of *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*: “Good exists in response to

evil. There is no good in isolation from evil” and “Evil supports good.

Without evil there would also be no good.”

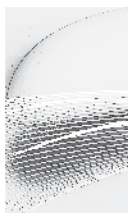
Good and evil are not substances. They are relative concepts. Therefore,

it cannot be said that a particular person is intrinsically good or intrinsically evil.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president, said: “Even a good person, if he opposes great good, immediately becomes a person of great evil. Even an evil person, if he opposes great evil, immediately becomes a person of great good.” The true entity of life embodies the oneness of good and evil. Both good and evil exist in life. For precisely this reason, in terms of practice, we have to base ourselves on the nature of enlightenment and strive for good.

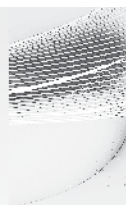
Buddhism is concerned with victory or defeat. It is a boundless struggle. Because Shakyamuni defeated Devadatta, Devadatta’s “evil” helped prove Shakyamuni’s “good.” On the other hand, had Shakyamuni been defeated by evil, it certainly would not have been possible for him to call Devadatta a “good friend.”

President Toda clarified this matter as follows:



The oneness of good and evil does not mean that good and evil are the same.

The oneness of good and evil is about striving to create good.



“Devadatta was the slanderer in Shakyamuni’s lifetime; he cut all the roots of goodness in the world. The pre-Lotus Sutra teachings say: ‘Without the existence of evil, wise actions of good cannot be manifested. For this reason, Devadatta had for immeasurable kalpas always been together with Shakyamuni, and when Shakyamuni practiced the Buddha way, Devadatta practiced injustice. In this way, they mutually inspired each other.’ However, once good is completely revealed, evil in its entirety becomes good. Therefore, the Lotus Sutra teaches the oneness of good and evil, the oneness of the erroneous and the true, and the oneness of a reverse relationship and a positive relationship. This is the inner doctrine that had not been revealed in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings” (*Toda Josei Zenshu*, vol. 6, pp. 360–61).

The Lotus Sutra teaches the oneness of good and evil, the oneness of the erroneous and the true, and the oneness of a reverse relationship and a positive relationship.

If evil functions to reveal good, then evil can be transformed into good. This is truly the oneness of good and evil. But if evil is simply allowed to run its course, then it does not become good. Only when evil is thoroughly challenged and conquered does it become an entity of the oneness of good and evil. In that sense, the enlightenment of evil people presented in the “Devadatta” chapter is great proof of the victory won by Shakyamuni.

The oneness of good and evil does not mean that good and evil are the same. Such a way of thinking amounts to an affirmation of evil. The Lotus Sutra’s doctrine of the oneness of good and evil is about constantly striving to create good and even changing evil into good.



## Chapter Two

### KEY POINTS

#### The Betrayal of the Five Senior Priests

Nichiren designated six priest-disciples to protect and propagate his teachings after his death. Among those six, only Nikko remained true to the Daishonin's teachings and spirit. The other five compromised the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism for their own interests. This is mainly the origin of the many sects that call themselves Nichiren Buddhism—a title they hold in name only.

The five senior priests' betrayal of the Daishonin's teaching was detailed in Nikko Shonin's writings such as "On the Matters That the Believers of the Fuji School Must Know" (GZ, 1601-09) and "Refuting the Five Senior Priests" (GZ, 1610-16). According to Nikko Shonin's account, the five senior priests' errors can be summarized as follows:

- 1) They asserted that the Daishonin's teachings belong to the Tendai school, and that he spread the teaching of the Lotus Sutra following the teaching of Dengyo.
- 2) They visited Shinto shrines in places such as Ise, Mount Izu, Hakone and Kumano.
- 3) They regarded copying the Lotus Sutra as a legitimate practice and encouraged it.
- 4) They allowed their disciples to enter the priesthood and receive the precepts at the Tendai sect's head temple at Mount Hiei.
- 5) They called the Daishonin's letters written in the common language of the time (hiragana, Japanese phonetic characters) their teacher's shame and destroyed them.
- 6) They made a statue of Shakyamuni and regarded it as an object of devotion.
- 7) They disrespected Gohonzon inscribed by the Daishonin, hanging them behind Shakyamuni's statues, leaving them in a corridor, burying them with bodies or selling them for profit.



- 8) They betrayed the Daishonin by aligning themselves with the Tendai school to avoid government pressure.

## The Betrayal of the Five Senior Priests

*“This is a teaching whereby we attain Buddhahood through correctly following the path of mentor and disciple. If one strays from the path of mentor and disciple, then even though one may claim to uphold the same Lotus Sutra one will fall into the hell of incessant suffering.”* — Nikko Shonin

Nichiren Daishonin’s life was one of overcoming endless persecutions in his efforts to propagate the Mystic Law. President Ikeda explains: “The Daishonin risked his life to strongly proclaim the correct teaching, and this frightened other religious figures, and created a deep sense of unease among those comfortable with old religious customs and traditions. This manifested as an outpouring of anger and jealousy toward him” (*The World of Nichiren Daishonin’s Writings*, vol. 2, pp. 2–3).

Just as Shakyamuni was victorious over the devilish functions that attacked him, Nichiren likewise defeated the onslaught of negative forces that appeared before him. He writes: “Day after day, month after month, year after year I have been subjected to repeated persecutions. Minor persecutions and annoyances are too numerous even to be counted, but the major persecutions number four... In addition, my disciples, my lay supporters, and even those who have merely listened to my teachings have been subjected to severe punishment and treated as though they were guilty of treason” (WND-1, 240).

After his death, his followers were still subjected to discrimination by government and religious authorities. This proved to be more than some of his closest followers could endure.

1. Nichiko Hori, “Reply to the Lay Believers in the Province of Sado,” in *Fuji Nikko Shonin Shoden* (Detailed Biography of Nikko Shonin) (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1963), p. 429.

## Nikko Refuses to Compromise Nichiren's Teachings

As events unfolded at Nichiren's residence in Mount Minobu after his death, it became necessary for Nikko to leave and establish a temple near Mount Fuji at what is today head temple Taiseki-ji. What led to Nikko's departure from the site of Nichiren's grave and the temple founded there was the slander of the steward of Minobu and betrayal of a fellow senior priest, Mimbu Niko (different Chinese character from Nikko). The steward Hakiri Sanenaga was a believer of Nichiren Buddhism, but was induced to embrace incorrect practices and beliefs.

Regarding these errors, the fifty-ninth high priest, Nichiko Hori (1867-1957), points out: "The gravest is his restoration of the Buddha's statue" (*Detailed Accounts of Nikko Shonin of the Fuji School*, p. 1729). Viewing Shakyamuni's statue as an object of devotion goes against the Daishonin's essential teaching that the Gohonzon is the basis of our faith and the fundamental object of devotion. Because of the gravity of Hakiri's behavior, Nikko Shonin refused to compromise. Rather than listening to Nikko, Sanenaga was encouraged in his error by Niko. Aware of the circumstances under which Sanenaga committed these slanderous acts, Nikko Shonin states in "Reply to Lord Hara": "These things are not the fault of lay priest [Hakiri]. They are solely the errors of the twisted priest" (*ibid.*, p. 1733).

President Ikeda states: "What is the standard for the Daishonin's disciples? It is nothing other than his writings. If we always bear in mind and base ourselves on this extremely clear and explicit principle, everything will become crystal clear.

"The Daishonin strictly admonishes us, 'To forget the original teacher who had brought one the water of wisdom from the great ocean of the Lotus Sutra and instead follow another would surely cause one to sink into the endless sufferings of birth and death' (WND-1, 747). To follow the Daishonin, who is the 'original teacher,' is the very meaning of our faith.

"Nikko Shonin, the second high priest, revered Nichiren Daishonin as the original Buddha and strictly upheld his teaching. The other senior priests, by contrast, forgot the teaching of the original

teacher and transferred their allegiance elsewhere. They haphazardly concocted false doctrines to accommodate persons of power and authority, whom they feared, and succumbed to the allures of the secular world” (*My Dear Friends in America*, p. 164).

In his letter, “Reply to Mimasaka-bo,” Nikko Shonin recounts the Daishonin’s last will and testament: “When the steward [of Minobu] goes against the Law, I shall not reside here” (*Hennentai Nichiren Daishonin Goshō*, p.1729). Following the Daishonin’s last instruction and to protect the integrity of Buddhism, Nikko Shonin moved to the Fuji area.

## Five Senior Priests Deviation from Nichiren Daishonin

Of the five senior priests, Nisshō (1221-1323) and Nichirō (1245-1320) became disciples of the Daishonin before Nikko Shonin (1246-1333). To them, Nikko Shonin was a junior priest. Niko (1253-1314) and Nitcho (1252-1317) joined the Daishonin’s order after Nikko Shonin, but they considered themselves his equals in status and seniority. Nichiji (1250-?) entered the priesthood under the guidance of Nikko Shonin, but disliked obeying his senior. Their jealousy and emotionalism clouded their judgment to the extent that they eventually stopped visiting Minobu and started to propound their own teachings.

Besides jealousy, the five senior priests’ cowardice and ignorance of the Daishonin’s Buddhism also played a role in their betrayal. After the Daishonin’s passing, Nisshō and Nichirō—who lived in Kamakura, the seat of the shogunate government—were oppressed by the government, which threatened to destroy their temples. They managed to escape from this predicament by offering to pray for the government based on the Tendai sect’s practice. Fearing persecution and eager to preserve their



security and social status, they curried favor with the government while compromising their teacher's will.

The five senior priests' shallow understanding of Buddhism and self-serving practice led them to believe that the Daishonin was spreading the Lotus Sutra based on the Tendai doctrine. In this regard, Nikko Shonin explains: "The five senior priests proclaimed

Fearing persecution and eager to preserve their security and social status, they curried favor with the government while compromising their teacher's will.

that Sage Nichiren's teaching is that of the Tendai school, so they called themselves in their letters submitted to the government 'the followers of the Tendai school'" (GZ, 1601). They also allowed their junior priests to receive the precepts at the Tendai school's head temple at Mount Hiei.

Nichiren was particularly offended by the Tendai school, because although under Dengyo it had upheld the Lotus Sutra as supreme, after Dengyo's death, the doctrine of the Tendai school was eroded by True Word school esotericism.

Jikaku became the Tendai school's third high priest in 854. He preached that the Mahavairocana Sutra was the highest of all Buddhist scriptures, with the Lotus Sutra in second place. The supremacy of the Lotus Sutra, which Dengyo dedicated his entire life to establishing despite many persecutions, was completely ignored by a so-called legitimate successor.

In referring to the dominant Buddhist schools of his time that he had convincingly discredited—Zen, Pure Land and True Word—Nichiren said this of the Tendai school and Jikaku: "And yet there is something that is more evil than these three teachings, so evil that it is a hundred, thousand, ten thousand, million times more difficult to believe" (WND-1, 569).

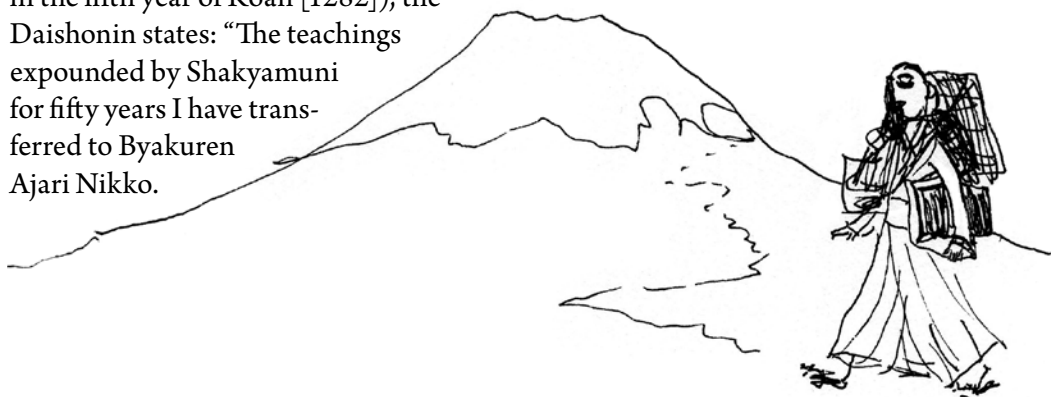
Nichiren would have been appalled that five of his senior disciples would involve themselves in the Tendai school.

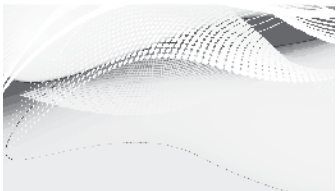
## Cowards Take Refuge in Tendai School

Within a few years after Nichiren's death, the five priests began to weaken. In 1285, Nissho submitted a petition to the government proclaiming to be a follower of the Tendai school. In other words, he stated that he was not a priest of Nichiren Buddhism. Nichiro submitted a similar petition that same year. Nitcho officially announced himself to be a priest of the Tendai school in 1291. Nichiji supported Honmon-ji temple at Ikegami and never supported Kuon-ji with Nikko at Minobu. That indicates that he probably also cast himself to be a priest of the Tendai school at the same time as Nichiro in 1285. Niko did not exercise diligence in refuting or refusing to support teachings that Nichiren had taught were erroneous. He compromised with the Shinto and Pure Land schools. Rather than courage based on faith, they succumbed to cowardice.

Not only did the five senior priests go against the Daishonin's teaching, but they also slandered Nikko Shonin for admonishing their errors. As Minobu school scholars acknowledge in *The Doctrinal History of the Nichiren Sect*, there was nothing remarkable in the five senior priests' Buddhist study. They grew weak in faith, became fearful of persecutions, became oblivious to the Daishonin's desire to spread the Law and eventually completely strayed from the Daishonin's teaching. These characteristics shared by the five senior priests are common to those who have betrayed Buddhism throughout its history.

In the document entrusting Kuon Temple at Mount Minobu to Nikko Shonin (dated the thirteenth day of the tenth month in the fifth year of Koan [1282]), the Daishonin states: "The teachings expounded by Shakyamuni for fifty years I have transferred to Byakuren Ajari Nikko.





Throughout the history of Buddhism, its decline and corruption have been caused by priests, especially those of high status.

He shall be chief priest of Kuon Temple at Mount Minobu. Those who betray him, be they lay believers or priests, shall be known as slanderers of the Law” (GZ, 1600). When the five senior priests started opposing and denouncing Nikko Shonin, they further proved themselves to be slanderers of the Law.

In “Letter from Sado,” the Daishonin also warns his followers of the treachery of priests acting against Buddhism: “Neither non-Buddhists nor the enemies of Buddhism can destroy the correct teaching of the Thus Come One, but the Buddha’s disciples definitely can. As a sutra says, only worms born of the lion’s body feed on the lion” (WND-1, 302). The Daishonin’s premonition came true soon after his passing. The five senior priests, as “the Buddha’s disciples,” attempted to destroy their teacher’s work from within. As the Daishonin points out, throughout the history of Buddhism, its decline and corruption have been caused by priests, especially those of high status. The history of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood is no exception to this historical pattern.

### Faith Ceases to Exist in Fuji School

For almost the next 700 years, the Fuji School struggled to survive. The sects founded by the other senior priests, who compromised with the government and were more centrally located, fared much better. The geographical isolation of Taiseki-ji and its long tradition of control by a few wealthy, rural families created a narrow-minded, provincial mindset. It was conservative, oriented to life in the countryside, and protective of established interests. The school was so weak that it recruited high priests from other sects for nine generations. This completely undermines their concept put forth today of transferring the “living essence” or heritage of Nichiren Buddhism from one high priest to another. It also deviated in interpreting the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. Faith had ceased to exist in the Fuji School. It was the correction of these mistakes that earned the twenty-sixth high priest Nichikan the title of “Great Restorer” of Nichiren Buddhism.



## Chapter Three

### KEY POINTS

#### Wartime Behavior of the Nichiren Shoshu Priesthood

*As the Japanese nation ran headlong toward World War II in the early twentieth century, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood succumbed to pressure from the government and compromised Nichiren Daishonin's teachings in support of the nation's war efforts and the state-supported Shinto religion, which promoted belief in the divinity of the emperor.*

- They deleted passages from Nichiren's writings viewed as disrespectful toward the emperor and the Shinto deity.
- They ceased publication of Nichiren's writings.
- They adopted the view of the Buddha as secondary to "deities."
- They revised the silent prayers of its liturgy to appease the military regime.
- High Priest Nikkyo issued a message in support of the war.
- Alarmed by the arrests of Gakkai leaders, the priesthood stripped them of their status as believers in the school.
- They instructed priests to enshrine a Shinto talisman in their living quarters at their branch temples.
- They instructed all believers to visit a local Shinto shrine for a festival to commemorate the birth of the late Emperor Meiji and to pray for Japan's victory in the war.
- They contributed head temple properties and natural resources to the military regime.
- They made the Grand Lodging Hall on the head temple



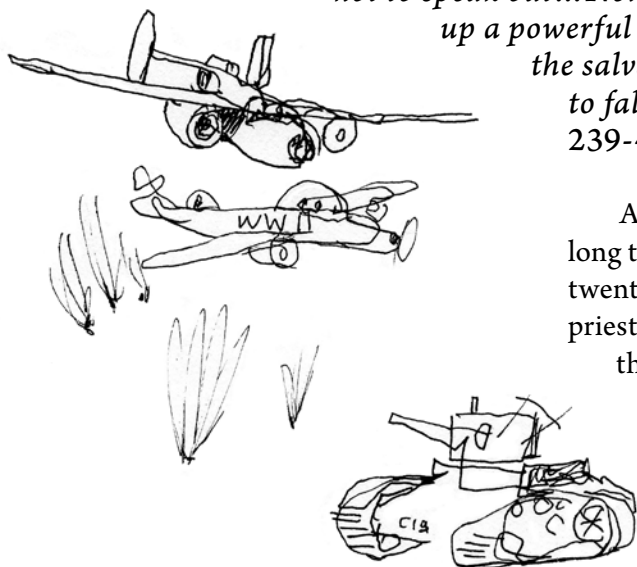
grounds available for a regiment of soldiers.

▀ They enshrined a Shinto talisman in the Grand Lodging Hall next to the high priest's living quarters.

## Wartime Behavior of the Nichiren Shoshu Priesthood

*"I, Nichiren, am the only person in all Japan who understands this [truth]. But if I utter so much as a word concerning it, then parents, brothers, and teachers will surely censure me, and the ruler of the nation will take steps against me. On the other hand, I am fully aware that if I do not speak out I will be lacking in compassion... If I speak out, I am fully aware that I will have to contend with the three obstacles and four devils. But of these two courses, surely the latter is the one to choose.*

*"If I were to falter in my determination in the face of persecutions by the sovereign, however, it would be better not to speak out... Nevertheless, I vowed to summon up a powerful and unconquerable desire for the salvation of all beings and never to falter in my efforts" (WND-1, 239-40).*



As the Japanese nation ran headlong toward World War II in the early twentieth century, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood succumbed to pressure from the government and compromised Nichiren Daishonin's teachings in support of the nation's war efforts and the state-supported Shinto religion, which promoted belief in the divin-

ity of the emperor. The priesthood's behavior contrasted sharply with that of the newly formed Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, whose first and second presidents demonstrated uncompromising commitment to the integrity and spread of Nichiren Buddhism. (The Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, or "Value-Creating Education Society," was the name of the Soka Gakkai prior to the war and its postwar reconstruction.)

During the 1920s and 1930s, Japan's militarist regime tightened its control over thought and religion. It cracked down on religious organizations deemed unfavorable to government policy. The government pressured the various Nichiren schools to delete from the Daishonin's writings passages it viewed as disrespectful toward the emperor and the Shinto deity. The Nichiren Shoshu administrative office issued a notice, dated August 24, 1941, stating that because the Daishonin's works were written more than seven hundred years ago during the social conditions of the Kamakura period, people of the present age, in reading his writings, might "doubt the Daishonin's desire to respect the emperor and protect his empire." Thus the priesthood decided to stop publication of the Daishonin's writings.

The notice also states: "The doctrine that the Buddha is true while deities are transient is a vulgar belief in Buddhism... This school, therefore, shall not rely on this doctrine as it has been previously interpreted."

## Priests Delete Passages of Nichiren's Writings

Furthermore, on September 29 of that same year, the Nichiren Shoshu Study Department issued a notice that instructed the deletion from Nichiren's writings of passages where the nation's sovereignty, symbolized by the Sun Goddess—which Shinto considers to be the supreme deity and origin of Japan's imperial lineage—is described as inferior or subordinate to the Buddha. For example, the priesthood deleted the passage where the Daishonin states, "I, Nichiren, am the foremost sage in all Jambudvipa" (WND-1, 642). Nichikan, the twenty-sixth high priest of Taiseki-ji, who restored the Daishonin's teaching within the Fuji School by correcting erroneous doctrines advocated by his predecessors, considered this passage to be one of

those constituting scriptural proof of the Daishonin's identity as the original Buddha. The Fuji School's view of the Daishonin's identity was a doctrinal mainstay that distinguished it from other Nichiren denominations, especially the Minobu School. The notice from the priesthood's study department also prohibited the use of the deleted passages in sermons or lectures. The decision to delete key passages of the Daishonin's writings and ban their usage was a serious doctrinal compromise.

In addition, Nichiren Shoshu revised the silent prayers of its liturgy to appease the military regime. Published in an August 22, 1941, notice, the new silent prayers extolled the nationalistic ideals of the military regime and promoted state Shinto. For example, the revised first silent prayer read in part, "I humbly thank the Sun Goddess, the ancestor of the emperor, and all emperors of the successive reigns since the time of first Emperor Jimmu for the great debt of gratitude I owe to them." In the fourth silent prayer, a prayer for the spread of Nichiren Buddhism, the priesthood inserted nationalistic expressions such as "the unity of government and people" and "the increase of the nation's majesty."

### Weak Priesthood Subject to Takeover Attempt

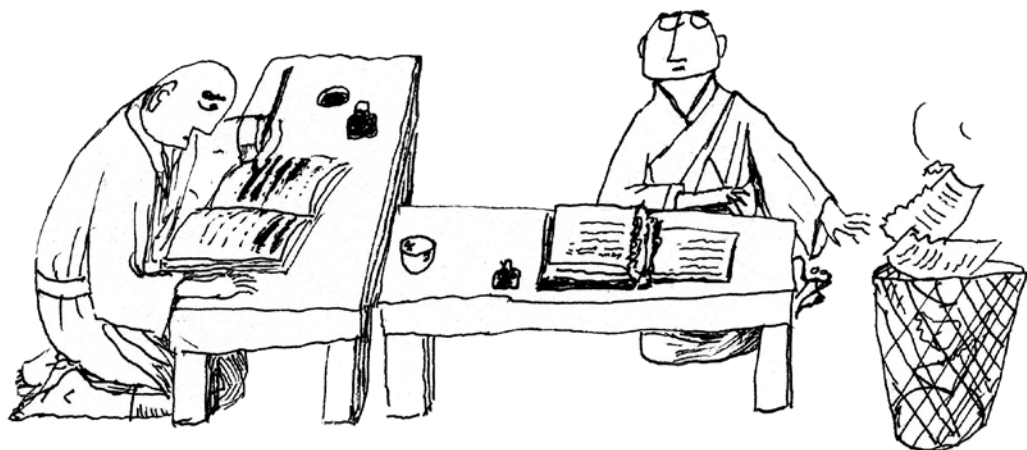
Behind the priesthood's doctrinal compromise was one high-ranking official of Nichiren Shoshu. Jimon Ogasawara, then a director of propagation, strongly requested that the priesthood adopt the doctrine that the Buddha is subordinate to the Shinto deity. Also, regarding the silent prayers, Ogasawara sharply criticized the head temple administration. In the magazine *Sekai no Nichiren* (Nichiren of the World), he writes: "To place the Sun Goddess after Brahma, Indra and the king devil of the sixth heaven is a great blasphemy. Heavenly deities worshiped in India such as Brahma and Indra must be deleted at once." His criticism was heard, and the Indian deities were promptly deleted from the silent prayers, while the Shinto deity and the emperor were given a more prominent place.

Ogasawara's scheme was chiefly motivated by his desire to gain control within the head temple administration. Earlier in his career, he had supported Nichikai (father of Nikken; later to become the

sixtieth high priest) in order to remove Nitchu, the fifty-eighth high priest, from office. But when Nichikai campaigned for the high office in an election after the resignation of the fifty-ninth high priest, Nichiko, Ogasawara supported his opponent, Koga Arimoto. Nichikai won the election, and Ogasawara lost his influence. Ogasawara was then forced out of the priesthood's ruling faction. By advocating a doctrine that subordinated Buddhism to Shinto, Ogasawara attempted to regain his influence.

Through his close associations with military officials, Ogasawara caused the government to apply pressure on Taiseki-ji. He also sent a letter to High Priest Nikkyo, asking him to clarify his stance regarding the relative merits of the Buddha and the Shinto deity. Ogasawara attempted to lure Nikkyo into making a statement offensive to the military regime, thus placing the high priest in a vulnerable position. Ogasawara's scheme, however, was not necessary. He underestimated the priesthood's willingness to compromise its doctrinal integrity to protect itself.

On September 14, 1942, the priesthood expelled Ogasawara, charging him with minor violations of the priesthood's rules and regulations such as failing to pay administrative dues. The decision, however, was political, not doctrinal. The fact that the priesthood continued to support the military regime's nationalistic propaganda based on state Shinto after Ogasawara's expulsion indicates that the head temple administration's decision was motivated by its desire to remove an element hostile to the controlling faction, not by an intent to punish Ogasawara for advocating an erroneous doctrine.



## High Priest Overjoyed Over Pearl Harbor Attack

On December 7, 1941, with its surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan declared war against the United States and Great Britain. At the start of the Pacific War, High Priest Nikkyo issued the following message: "Today His Majesty declared war on the United States of America and Great Britain. I can hardly suppress my awe and joy at this...I ask that all believers summon forth the faith and practice they assiduously developed thus far and ensure victory in this great, unprecedented battle, through their resolve to endure any hardship and exert their utmost in their respective positions and capacities."

While the priesthood supported the nation's war efforts, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai continued to uphold the Daishonin's teachings and refused to accept Shinto. The priesthood grew nervous about the lay organization's stance. In June 1943, the priesthood summoned Soka Gakkai leaders to the head temple. With Nikkyo, the sixty-second high priest, and Nichiko, the retired fifty-ninth high priest, in attendance, Jikai Watanabe, then director of general affairs, instructed the Gakkai members to accept a Shinto talisman, a small religious paper depicting the Sun Goddess. The government was urging all households to enshrine and worship this talisman. President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi refused. Later that same month, Makiguchi returned to the head temple to remonstrate with the high priest on this point. His warning, however, fell on deaf ears. Instead of heeding Makiguchi's warning, the priesthood disciplined the Gakkai leaders for their disobedience by barring them from visiting the head temple.

In July, 21 Soka Gakkai leaders, including President Makiguchi and General Director Josei Toda, were arrested. Shortly before this crackdown, on June 16, Renjo Fujimoto, a Nichiren Shoshu priest, was arrested for treason. (Fujimoto eventually died in prison in January 1944.) Alarmed by the arrests, the head temple administration expelled Fujimoto from the priesthood and stripped the Gakkai leaders of their status as believers in the school. The priesthood denied all ties with those who, on account of their belief in Nichiren Buddhism, had offended the military regime.

## Priesthood Supports War Effort

Still, Nichiren Shoshu's support for the nation's war efforts and its disciplinary measures against those who disobeyed them were not enough to put the minds of the priests at ease. During priests' seminars held at Taiseki-ji on August 21 and 22, and again on August 25 and 26, the head temple administration instructed participants to enshrine a Shinto talisman in their living quarters at their branch temples. On November 1, the head temple's administrative office issued a notice instructing all believers to visit a local Shinto shrine for a festivity to commemorate the birth of the late Emperor Meiji and to pray for Japan's victory in the war.

The priesthood also contributed head temple properties to the military regime. Giant cedar trees on the temple grounds were felled for lumber, and a large bell was removed for recasting as ammunition for military use. The priesthood's official magazine, *Dai-Nichiren*, reported in 1944:

“The contribution of good timber from our sacred grounds was made so that it may be turned into ships to crush the United States and Great Britain, and this ac-



cords with the honest desire of the Buddha to secure the peace of the land through establishing the truth (*rissho ankoku*)...These old cedar trees and the large bell, which have been donated,...shall respectively become a ship to carry the soldiers, supplies and weapons of the Imperial Army and bullets to penetrate the breasts of fierce enemies as intended by the Buddha.”

In December 1944, the priesthood made the Grand Lodging Hall on the head temple grounds available for a regiment of the Korean Volunteer Army. Despite its euphemistic name, the “volunteer army” consisted of Koreans brought to Japan as farm laborers from their occupied country, under the command of Japanese military officers. Soon after the regiment came to the head temple, a Shinto talisman was enshrined in the Grand Lodging Hall next to the high priest’s living quarters. The enshrinement of a Shinto talisman at the head temple was emblematic of the priesthood’s distortion of the Daishonin’s teachings.

After Makiguchi’s death in 1944, Toda eulogized him stating: “My mentor gave his life to the Lotus Sutra. As he always quoted the Daishonin, saying that it is a wise man’s dishonor to be praised by a fool, he at last was praised by the greatest man of wisdom [Nichiren Daishonin]” (*Complete Works of Josei Toda*, vol. 1, p. 529).

Makiguchi’s martyrdom stood in contrast to the high priest’s tragic death in a fire at Taisei-ji on June 17, 1945. Around 10:30 p.m., a fire broke out in a meeting hall of the building that housed the high priest’s residence and quickly spread through his living quarters, the adjacent study, the Mutsubo Hall and the Reception Hall. The fire was caused by a student priest’s cigarette. A gruesome discovery was made in the charred ruins. High Priest Nikkyo was found dead—the only one who died in the fire.





## Chapter Four

# Postwar Expansion Under President Toda

*On July 3, 1945, Josei Toda was released from the Toshima Penitentiary in Tokyo to find his country burned to ashes, people in utter misery and destitution, and the Soka Gakkai nearly destroyed. Jailed in the same facility as his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Toda read the Lotus Sutra and continued to chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo in his cell. His study and prayer in prison eventually led him to a profound awakening—an awakening to his mission to spread Nichiren Buddhism as a leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. These are the bodhisattvas described in the Lotus Sutra who would become the sutra’s devout practitioners long after the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha. Upon his release from prison, Toda was resolved to realize the will of his late mentor, who had died in confinement, and spread Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings throughout war-torn Japan. He wasted no time in beginning the reconstruction of the Soka Gakkai.*

Josei Toda was inaugurated the second Soka Gakkai president on May 3, 1951. Approximately 3,080 members signed the petition for Toda’s inauguration. They represented the active membership of the Soka Gakkai. In his inaugural speech, Toda made a bold declaration: “While I am alive, I will achieve the propagation of 750,000 households by my own hand. If this cannot be achieved in my lifetime, please do not hold my funeral. Just dispose of my body off the coast of Shinagawa” (*Complete Works of Josei Toda*, vol. 3, p. 433).

Envisioning a dramatic increase in membership, Josei Toda submitted a request to Nissho, the sixty-fourth high priest, to transcribe a Gohonzon for the propagation of Nichiren Buddhism. In response, the high priest transcribed a Gohonzon with the inscription “For the achievement of the wide spread of the Great Law through compassionate propagation” and conferred it upon the Soka Gakkai on May 20, 1951. This Gohonzon is symbolic of the

Soka Gakkai's essential role, its dedication to broadly disseminating the essence of Buddhism.

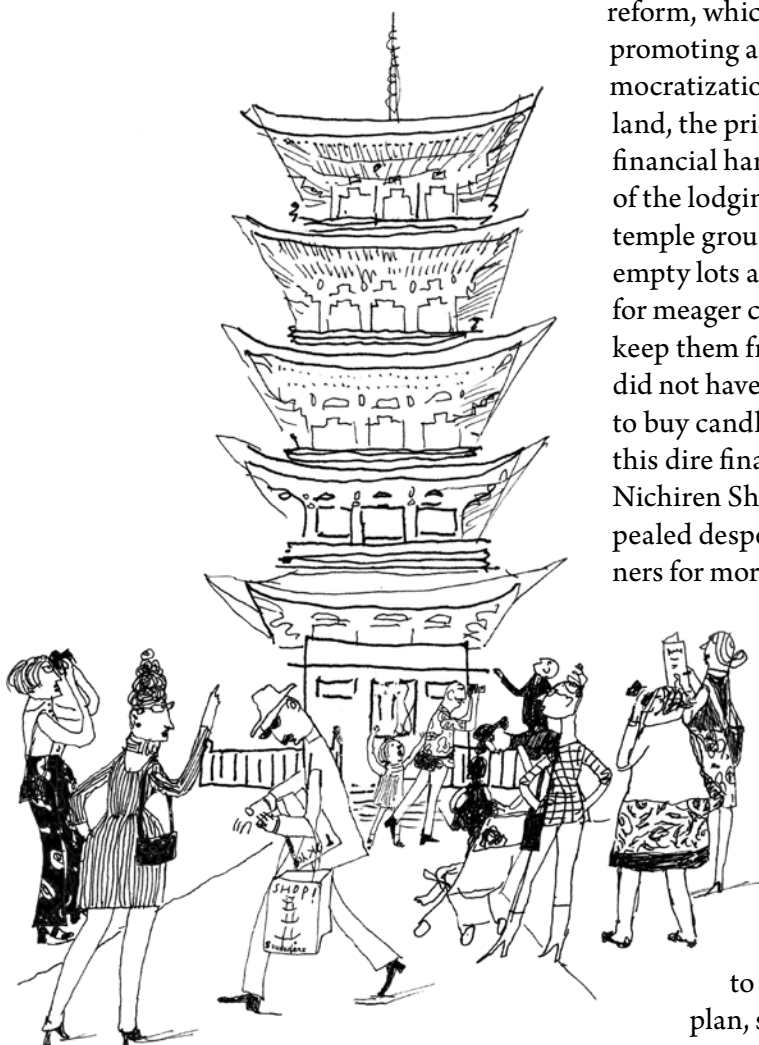
## Toda Saves Head Temple from Becoming Tourist Stop

The Nichiren Shoshu temples sustained significant damage during the war; major facilities at the head temple burned down, and many branch temples were destroyed in air raids. Furthermore, in December 1945, Taiseki-ji lost its farmland in the postwar agrarian

reform, which the government was promoting as part of the nation's democratization. When it lost its farmland, the priesthood faced severe financial hardship. The chief priests of the lodging temples on the head temple grounds had to cultivate empty lots and hillsides themselves for meager crops—just enough to keep them from starvation. They did not have enough money even to buy candles for the altars. In this dire financial situation, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood appealed desperately to its parishioners for more financial support.

In November 1950, the priesthood decided to promote Taiseki-ji as a tourist attraction to generate additional income and held a conference at the reception hall to discuss how.

Toda was enraged to hear the priesthood's plan, stating that tourists



who were not seeking the Gohonzon must not be allowed on the head temple grounds. His strong opposition prevented the plan from being realized. To relieve the head temple of its financial burden, Toda organized group pilgrimages of Soka Gakkai members. This was in spite of the fact that the number of Soka Gakkai members at the time was relatively small, and their financial prospects were no more hopeful than those of the priesthood.

Toda often expressed his belief that when the Law is about to be obscured and driven to extinction, that is precisely the time for its true development and broad propagation to begin.

The celebration to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the establishment of Nichiren Buddhism was held at Taiseki-ji on April 27 and 28, 1952. Attended by 4,000 Soka Gakkai members, the event was unprecedented in scale for both the priesthood and the Soka Gakkai at that time. On April 24 of that year, the Soka Gakkai had published *The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* (Jpn, *Gosho Zenshu*), which had been edited by Nichiko Hori, the retired fifty-ninth high priest and renowned historian of Nichiren Buddhism. Until this time, Nichiren Shoshu had relied on an edition of Nichiren's writings published by the Minobu school founded by Niko.

The publication of Nichiren's writings marked the beginning of the Soka Gakkai's broad-based study movement, solidifying the Soka Gakkai's philosophical foundation. In his preface to *The Collected Writings*, Toda compares Buddhist study to the strict discipline of swordsmanship (GZ, 1). Toda was passionate about the importance of Buddhist study in one's practice.

## The Ogasawara Incident—The Traitor Priest

On the evening of April 27, during commemorative activities at the head temple, Soka Gakkai youth division members found out that Jimon Ogasawara was also staying there. As mentioned in the previous chapter, during World War II, Ogasawara had propounded the erroneous doctrine that regarded the Buddha as a transient manifestation of the Shinto goddess in order to curry favor with Japan's militaristic regime. He also worked to induce the government to persecute the Soka Gakkai, leading to the impris-

onment of Makiguchi and Toda. Ogasawara's presence at the head temple on this auspicious occasion came as a great surprise to the youth division members, because he had been expelled from the priesthood long ago.

During the war, Ogasawara had pushed for the merger of Nichiren Shoshu and the Minobu-based Nichiren school founded by the senior priests that betrayed Nichiren. He was said to have had a secret agreement with the Nichiren school that allegedly promised him the position of general administrator or chief priest at Taiseki-ji or Seicho-ji. Furthermore, Ogasawara attempted to have High Priest Nikkyo arrested on the charge of treason. Ironically, Ogasawara's attempt to take control of the head temple encouraged the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood to stray further from Nichiren Buddhism and support Shintoism and the government's war efforts. Since Ogasawara corrupted Nichiren Buddhism, incited persecutions against the Soka Gakkai and attempted to control the head temple for personal gain, he should have been condemned as an enemy not only to Nichiren Buddhism and the Soka Gakkai but also to the priesthood itself.

The youth division members met Ogasawara at one of the lodging temples on the head temple grounds and refuted his erroneous doctrine. Then they escorted him to the grave of Makiguchi, where he wrote a letter of apology to Nichiren Daishonin for distorting the Daishonin's teachings. This is known as the Ogasawara Incident.

### Temple Sides with Traitor Priest

When youth division members reprimanded Ogasawara's offenses at the head temple, however, the priesthood was not pleased. Though it was a sincere action to protect the integrity of Nichiren Buddhism, the head temple administration regarded the incident as a disruption of an auspicious celebration. It also viewed the Soka Gakkai's refutation of Ogasawara as challenging the high priest's prerogative to decide what is orthodox and what is heretical. The Nichiren Shoshu executive priests thought it inappropriate for lay believers to refute any priest who had been ordained under the high priest's authority. Put simply, the incident

was viewed as arrogance by lay believers toward the authority of the priesthood as well as the high priest. Many priests throughout Japan expressed their discontent.

In the middle of May, following the incident, the priesthood published the April issue of *Dai-Nichiren*, its official monthly magazine. This belated April issue contained notice of Ogasawara's reinstatement, as of April 5, into the priesthood. In other words, the priesthood retroactively readmitted Ogasawara to the priesthood after the incident. This provided a pretext for accusing the Soka Gakkai of criticizing a Nichiren Shoshu priest on the head temple grounds.

Actually, Ogasawara was reinstated into the priesthood soon after the war. On March 31, 1946, Nichiman, the sixty-third high priest, restored Ogasawara's status as a Nichiren Shoshu priest. His reinstatement was public knowledge within the priesthood, as he ran for a position on the Nichiren Shoshu council in 1947. According to an April 28, 1947, publication, Ogasawara was not elected. However, when the Soka Gakkai inquired about Ogasawara's status, the priesthood on numerous occasions denied that he was a Nichiren Shoshu priest. For example, the May 1951 issue of *Dai-Nichiren* contains the following notice from the Nichiren Shoshu administrative office: "The *Seikyo Shimbun* reported that a priest who had filed a suit against High Priest Nikkyo Suzuki and attempted to disband Nichiren Shoshu still remains at the head temple. It must be clarified, however, that there is no such priest among the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood." So naturally, when the incident took place, none of the Soka Gakkai members suspected that Ogasawara was a Nichiren Shoshu priest.

On June 28, 1952, the Nichiren Shoshu council met to discuss the Ogasawara Incident. The council passed a resolution calling on Toda to submit a letter of apology to the head temple through the chief priest of the branch temple to which he belonged, ordered his

Put simply, the incident was viewed as arrogance by lay believers toward the authority of the priesthood as well as the high priest. Many priests throughout Japan expressed their discontent.



dismissal from the position of chief lay representative and barred him from visiting the head temple.

## Youth Rise Up to Protect President Toda

Outraged by this resolution, the Soka Gakkai youth division visited the council members one by one and tried to convince them of the unjust nature of their decision. Through their efforts, the situation gradually improved. On July 24, Nissho, the sixty-fourth high priest, issued a written admonition to Toda. In response, Toda submitted a letter of apology, in which he expressed his confidence in

Toda was keenly aware of the priesthood's authoritarianism and its limitations in terms of its ability and sense of responsibility for the spread of Nichiren Buddhism.

the action taken by the youth division. He states in the letter: "When we see those in our school who are weak in their faith in the Great Pure Law and leaning toward slander of the Law, because we keep the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin deep in our hearts . . . we tend to be uncompromising in our battle . . . Since I believe that our action did not contradict the golden words of the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin in the slightest, I am not ashamed to call myself a believer of Nichiren Shoshu before

the Gohonzon. Therefore, I will not resign from the position of chief lay representative."

Later, Ogasawara lodged a complaint with police against Soka Gakkai leaders, including Toda, and a police investigation of the incident followed. However, Ogasawara filed a complaint also against the high priest, and as a result was strongly criticized within Nichiren Shoshu. Eventually, he retracted his complaints. Even after causing so much turmoil, the priesthood took no disciplinary action against Ogasawara.

The Ogasawara Incident highlighted the priesthood's desire to protect its authority, as well as its tendency to look condescend-



ingly upon lay believers. Instead of making Nichiren's teachings a guideline for its behavior, the priesthood allowed its decisions to be driven by these baser motives such as their attachment to formalities and hierarchies. The priesthood was afraid that if it allowed the Soka Gakkai to rebuke Ogasawara for his actions during the war, it would be subjected to further criticism from the laity.

This incident, however, did not in the least shake the Soka Gakkai's confidence in Nichiren's teachings or its movement to spread them. When Toda heard about the council resolution to prohibit him from visiting the head temple, he said: "It is all right if they want to bar me from visiting the head temple. It is not as if we cannot attain enlightenment unless we go to the head temple. The Daishonin's writings clearly explain this principle."

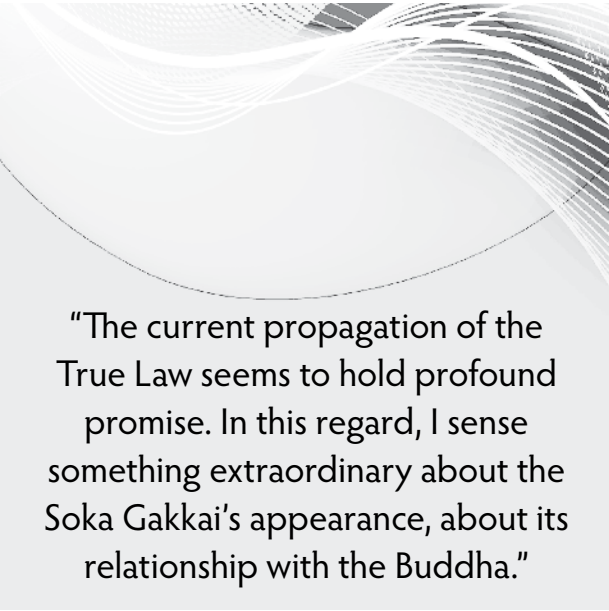
## Priests Non-supportive in Kosen-rufu Effort

In August 1952, the Soka Gakkai was incorporated as an independent religious organization. Toda was keenly aware of the priesthood's authoritarianism and its limitations in terms of its ability and sense of responsibility for the spread of Nichiren Buddhism. With incorporation, the Soka Gakkai's propagation efforts made further progress, as it could now take the initiative and full responsibility for its actions.

Although the Soka Gakkai strove to spread Nichiren Buddhism, the priesthood was not cooperative. Most Nichiren Shoshu priests did not understand the Soka Gakkai's earnest efforts in propagation. Many were even critical. In those early days of the Soka Gakkai's development, there were about 100 branch temples throughout Japan and 10 in Tokyo. Only two temples in Tokyo were willing to conduct initiation ceremonies for new converts introduced by Soka Gakkai members. As the Soka Gakkai conducted its propagation nationwide, more branch temples gradually started to conduct initiation ceremonies.

Because there were virtually no new converts before the existence of the Soka Gakkai, Nichiren Shoshu priests were not accustomed to conducting initiation ceremonies. (Most parishioners and their families had belonged to Nichiren Shoshu temples for generations, and as such, had been considered believers from birth.)





“The current propagation of the True Law seems to hold profound promise. In this regard, I sense something extraordinary about the Soka Gakkai’s appearance, about its relationship with the Buddha.”

As more people took faith in Nichiren Buddhism, President Makiguchi saw practical merit in a solemn ceremony to encourage converts in their new faith and draw a distinction between Nichiren Buddhism and their previous religious affiliation.

In Nichiren Buddhism, however, to embrace the Go-honzon is in and of itself to accept the supreme Buddhist precept, so a ceremony was not strictly necessary.

## Soka Gakkai Offers Financial Support

Although the head temple professed strict adherence to Nichiren Daishonin’s and Nikko Shonin’s teachings in matters of Buddhist doctrine, it continued to allow its branch temples and parishioners to enshrine objects of other faiths. For example, some lodging temples on the head temple grounds continued to enshrine the Shinto talisman even after the Soka Gakkai’s organized pilgrimages had begun. As late as the mid-1950s, Soka Gakkai youth division members encouraged one lodging temple to remove a Shinto talisman. In this regard, Nichiko Hori, the fifty-ninth high priest, states: “Those who appear to be strict with regard to the slander of the Law yet are lenient in reality are monstrous” (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 1, p. 153).

While the Soka Gakkai continued to spread Nichiren Buddhism, it also began making contributions to the priesthood. On the head temple grounds, Soka Gakkai members’ financial contributions made possible the restoration of the Five-Storied Pagoda, the repair of the Somon Gate, the construction of Hoan-den, the construction and renovation of lodging temples, the construction of the Grand Lecture Hall and more.

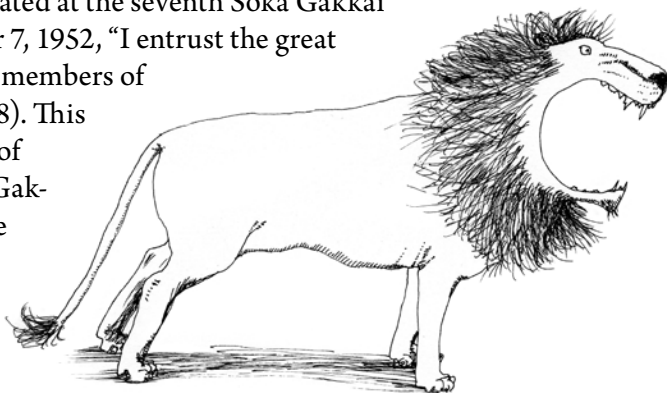
Furthermore, numerous branch temples were constructed and donated by the Soka Gakkai. With the rapid progress of propagation,

the priesthood soon attained an unprecedented level of prosperity. The postwar restoration of the priesthood was made possible solely through the Soka Gakkai's efforts. In this regard, Nichiko Hori once said to Toda, "Mr. Toda, if it weren't for you, Nichiren Shoshu would have already collapsed."

With the advent of the Soka Gakkai and its rapid development after World War II, a new era of Nichiren Buddhism was unfolding. On New Year's Day in 1956, Nichijun, the sixty-fifth high priest, stated: "When I look back over the last 700 years and compare them with our circumstances today, it is apparent that we have undergone a great transformation; a new era in history has been created. That is, through the propagation of the Soka Gakkai, the True Law has spread throughout the nation. The unprecedented expansion of our order is being realized. In this regard, future historians will probably define the first 700 years [since Nichiren's establishment of his teaching] as an era of protection by the priesthood, and the era thereafter as an era of spread and propagation" (*Complete Works of High Priest Nichijun*, p. 1620).

Nichijun continues: "Seven hundred years after the Dais-honin's establishment of his teaching, wide-scale propagation began. The current propagation of the True Law seems to hold profound promise. In this regard, I sense something extraordinary about the Soka Gakkai's appearance, about its relationship with the Buddha" (*ibid.*, p. 1622).

Nichijun realized that the priesthood's role to preserve Nichiren's teachings was ending, and the Soka Gakkai's era of propagation had begun. Nichijun stated at the seventh Soka Gakkai general meeting on December 7, 1952, "I entrust the great propagation of the Law to the members of the Soka Gakkai" (*ibid.*, p. 308). This statement, leaving the spread of Nichiren's teachings to Soka Gakkai members, apparently arose from Nichijun's awareness of the priesthood's lack of ability in spreading Buddhism on its own.



## Historic Declaration Against the Use of Nuclear Weapons

On September 8, 1957, during a youth division athletic meet in Yokohama, Toda made a historic declaration against the use of nuclear weapons, urging the young people present to communicate Nichiren's emphasis on the respect for life and thus bring lasting peace to the entire world. President Ikeda writes, "A unique attribute of Toda's declaration against nuclear weapons was its call for the destruction of this devilish nature lurking deep within the lives of human beings. Toda thought it urgently necessary to establish the view that nuclear weapons are devilish creations, an absolute evil whose very existence should be rejected" (*The Human Revolution*, vol. II, p. 1779–80). With his antinuclear declaration, Toda laid the philosophical foundation for the SGI's movement to promote peace and culture based on Buddhism.

By the end of 1957, the Soka Gakkai's membership grew to more than 760,000 households, surpassing Toda's lifelong goal of 750,000 households and thereby solidifying the foundation of the spread of Nichiren Buddhism in Japan. His goal complete, Toda died on April 2, 1958. He was 58. At the eighteenth Soka Gakkai general meeting held soon after Toda's death, on May 3, 1958, High Priest Nichijun stated: "In the Lotus Sutra, great bodhisattvas equal in number to the grains of sand of sixty-thousand Ganges rivers, led by four leaders including the foremost, Bodhisattva Superior Practices, gather at the assembly of Eagle Peak and pledge to spread Myoho-enge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law. Those bodhisattvas are now appearing as they promised at the assembly on Eagle Peak.

"It was President Toda who, as their leader, called forth those bodhisattvas; it was in the Soka Gakkai that they gathered. In other words, it was President Toda who manifested the five and seven characters of Myoho-enge-kyo as 750,000 [bodhisattvas]" (*Complete Works of High Priest Nichijun*, p. 357). In his eulogy, Nichijun stated that Toda, inheriting the will of his mentor, Makiguchi, had reconstructed the Soka Gakkai and laid the foundation for the spread of the Law in Japan in accord with the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin.



## Chapter 5

# Stormy April 24

An Essay by SGI President Ikeda

*In this essay, President Ikeda remembers April 24, 1979, the day he resigned as Soka Gakkai president. A conspiracy of priests and Soka Gakkai traitors was pushing him out, and the top leaders were too weak to protect him. He was left to wonder, 'Where was the Gakkai spirit, that they should have allowed themselves to be so overcome by circumstances?'*

Recently, I received a kind message of support from a well-known scholar. He said: "With the phenomenal growth the Soka Gakkai has achieved today, I am sure you face many challenges and difficulties. It is truly impressive that the Soka Gakkai has become one of the prime movers of Japan.

"Knowing you suffered from a weak constitution in your youth, I worried for your health. But watching you over the decades, as you have tirelessly proceeded to complete one momentous undertaking after another, I have only the greatest respect and admiration for you."

Another very well-known figure also wrote me a letter of encouragement: "I applaud your unrivaled achievement of building a great force for peace. No one, either before or after World War II, has accomplished anything of this importance.

"You have achieved what you have as an ordinary citizen, not as a political leader or a person of privileged background. Even taking into account the fact that you had a great mentor like Josei Toda, what you have achieved is truly without precedent. Moreover, you have endured unending criticism and insult, and you have repulsed the plots and attacks of your opponents.

"You have not limited yourself to the narrow confines of Japan but have made the world the stage for your activities. Your global endeavors, your broad vision and your initiatives for peace will without

a doubt go down in history.”

And a distinguished person whom I have been friends with for many years also wrote me: “It can only be a miracle. The towering work of art — the great and unprecedented achievement — which you have accomplished, while enduring envy and scorn and receiving not a word of praise, would have been lauded by Napoleon and Hugo.”

### “Worthies and saints are tested by abuse”

April 24, 1979. That was the day I stepped down as third Soka Gakkai president, a position I had held for 19 years, and became honorary president. When they heard the announcement, members all across Japan — indeed, all around the world — were left stunned and speechless.

Behind my sudden resignation were the insidious tyranny of Nichiren Shoshu and a plethora of attacks on the Gakkai by traitorous members, who had renounced their faith and joined forces with scheming priests at the head temple. They contrived plots and persecutions for my destruction beyond the power of words to describe. These morally bankrupt individuals, who had completely abandoned all that is good and just, continue to this day to devise foul schemes against me, hoping to vent their twisted rage. I’m sure this is something all of you know.

Nichiren Daishonin often cites the Lotus Sutra passage “There will be many ignorant people / who will curse and speak ill of us” (LSOC, 193). Being the object of such curses because of one’s efforts for kosen-rufu is proof that one is a true practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. In “Letter from Sado,” the Daishonin writes, “Worthies and saints are tested by abuse” (WND-1, 303). Refusing to be deterred by abuse, false accusations and scorn is the very mark of a person of true faith and practice.

Each time I heard of the suffering, anguish and indignation caused my dear comrades by the cruel oppression of bestial priests, my heart bled. Many nights, the pain in my heart was so intense that I could not sleep.

To protect my sincere fellow members, I sought with all my

being to find a way to forge harmonious unity between the priesthood and lay believers. But all my efforts looked as if they would come to naught when a top Soka Gakkai leader — who later quit and renounced his faith — made inappropriate remarks. The Gakkai's enemies, who were waiting all along to destroy us, pounced eagerly. The priests raised an uproar and demanded that I take responsibility for this person's words.

I agonized over the situation. I knew I had to prevent further suffering from being inflicted on our members and to protect them from the persecution of the priests. Mr. Toda had said that the Soka Gakkai was more precious to him than his own life. The Gakkai is an organization that follows the Buddha's intent and decree to the letter; it is dedicated to the happiness of the people, the propagation of Buddhism and world peace.

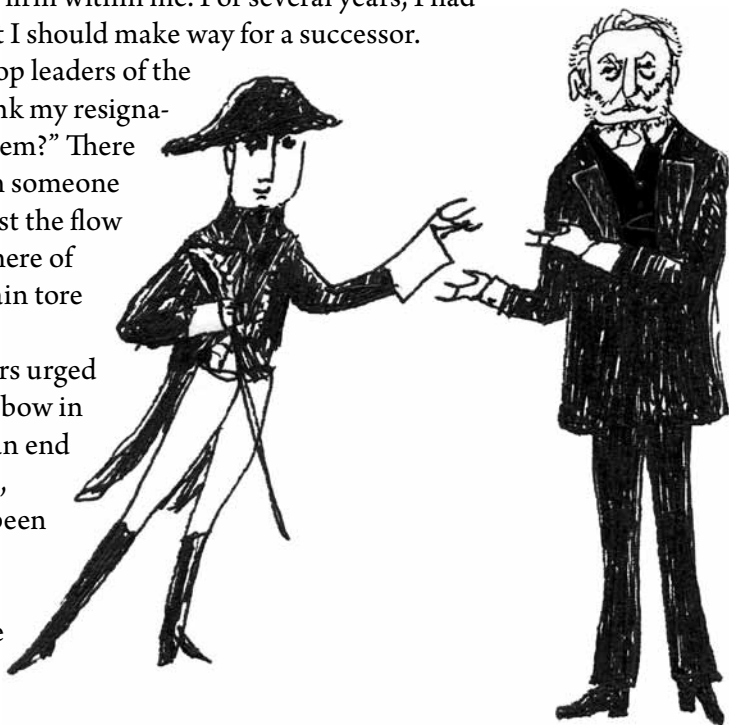
*"You can't go against the flow of the times."*

My resolve to take all the blame upon myself and to resign the presidency gradually grew firm within me. For several years, I had already been thinking that I should make way for a successor.

One day, I asked the top leaders of the Soka Gakkai, "Do you think my resignation would settle the problem?" There was a painful silence. Then someone spoke: "You can't go against the flow of the times." The atmosphere of the room froze. A sharp pain tore through my heart.

Even if all our members urged me not to, I was willing to bow in apology, if it would bring an end to the turmoil. And in fact, my resignation may have been unavoidable.

I also knew how exhausted everyone was, due to the long, defensive



battle in which they had all fought so hard.

But “flow of the times”!? It was the attitude, the state of mind underlying that utterance that so disturbed me. I could detect no trace of the fighting spirit to protect the Soka Gakkai with one’s life or the willingness to fight together with me, no matter the times or circumstances.

The priesthood put pressure on the Soka Gakkai with the secret aim of disbanding it as a religious organization. Corrupt, evil individuals, including a treacherous Gakkai attorney, had suggested this to them. Whether or not the Soka Gakkai’s leaders knew it at the time, they had allowed themselves to become entrapped by the nefarious strategies of the priests and members who had renounced their faith and betrayed the organization.

It was pitiful. I was completely at a loss for words.

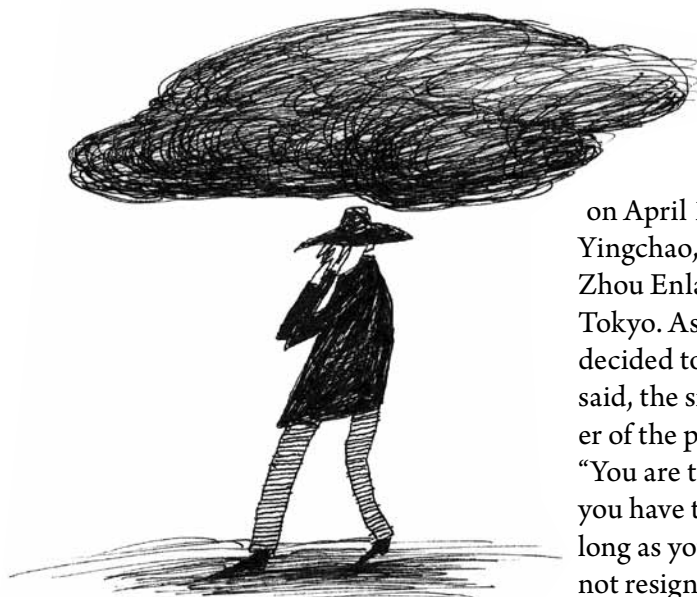
Mr. Toda had told us all: “Protect the third president! Protect

him as long as you live! If you do so, you will definitely be able to achieve kosen-rufu!” Had the top leaders of the Soka Gakkai forgotten the spirit of their beloved mentor? How pathetically they had let themselves be defeated!

Where was the Gakkai spirit that they should have allowed themselves to be so overcome by circumstances?

In the midst of all this,

on April 12, I met Madame Deng Yingchao, the widow of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, at the State Guesthouse in Tokyo. As we parted, I told her that I had decided to resign. “You mustn’t!” she said, the smiling face of this great mother of the people suddenly growing stern. “You are too young to resign. Above all, you have the support of the people. As long as you have their support, you must not resign. You must not retreat even





a single step!” Those were the resolute words of a person who had lived through death-defying challenges and danger.

That dark day, April 24, arrived. It was a Tuesday. Representative leaders from all over Japan had joyfully gathered at the Shinjuku Culture Center.

But what should have been a momentous meeting marking a fresh departure and the end of the first Seven Bells — seven seven-year periods of the Gakkai’s development from its founding in 1930 — became instead the announcement of my resignation and the appointment of a new president.

This news came as a complete surprise to the majority of leaders. I entered the hall halfway through the meeting, and cries rose from the audience: “Sensei, don’t resign!”

“Sensei, remain as our president!” “All our members are waiting for you!” Their faces were clouded with anxiety. Afterward, people who attended the meeting declared angrily that there had never been a darker, more cheerless Soka Gakkai meeting.

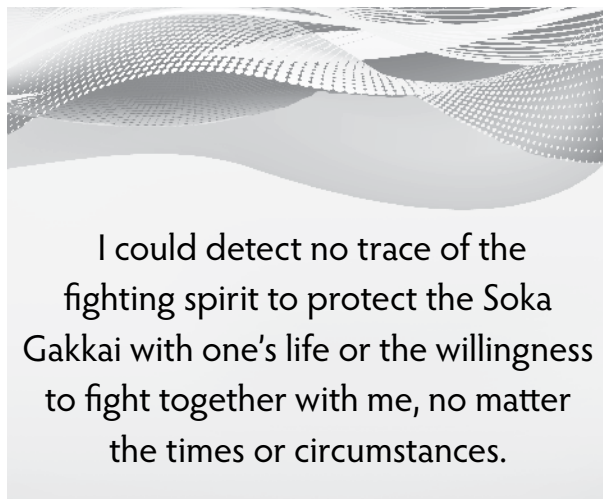
I said with firm conviction: “I won’t change in the least. Do not worry! I am Mr. Toda’s direct disciple! Right will win out in the end!”

*This far, far too bitter day  
I will never forget  
The dusk presses in  
And I walk alone*

This is a poem I recorded in my diary that day, April 24.

When I got home and told my wife that I had resigned, she greeted me with a smile, just as she always did, without asking a single question. With her usual, imperturbable composure, she said: “Is that so? Thank you for all your hard work.”

(Originally appeared in the May 14, 1999, *World Tribune*, p. 7)



*One example of the difficulties faced by Soka Gakkai members from the arrogant behavior of the priesthood in the 1970s is revealed in this letter from 1991 that refers to the time of President Ikeda's resignation.*

Letter of Protest from Shikoku Women's Division

To: High Priest Nikken

From: Soka Gakkai Women's Division Leaders of Shikoku

Date: January 12, 1991

We, the women's division of Shikoku Island, have been devoted to kosen-rufu activities in our area since the early days of the Soka Gakkai. At the same time, we have been fighting as proud Nichiren Shoshu Soka Gakkai members against the intolerance, prejudice, and deep-rooted old-fashioned conventionalism of people in our community, which is known as the "Kingdom of the Shingon sect." At times, we have been shunned by the community, experiencing the rejection of local temples of other sects that refused to allow the internment of our members' ashes in their cemeteries. Yet, burning with a strong sense of mission for the kosen-rufu of true Buddhism, we have persevered, wholeheartedly devoted to the practice of shakubuku.

However, a little more than ten years ago, in the midst of dire circumstances when we were ostracized by the community, a Nichiren Shoshu priest, who we had thought would understand and fully support us, suddenly began saying things like "From now on, unless you belong directly to the temple (meaning, unless you quit the Soka Gakkai), I will not conduct funerals or perform any other services for you," or "Unless you quit the Soka Gakkai, you will fall into hell together with President Ikeda."

## Chapter Six

# Attacked From Within and From Without

## The First Priesthood Issue and President Ikeda's Resignation

*In his inauguration speech May 3, 1960, President Ikeda quoted the following passage from Nichiren Daishonin: "This I will state. Let the gods forsake me. Let all persecutions assail me. Still I will give my life for the sake of the Law" (WND-1, 280). The following chapters go into some detail of persons and events regarding Soka Spirit.*

President Ikeda's resignation sent shock waves through the Soka Gakkai. Most members and leaders had no idea that this was going to take place. But leading up to his resignation were many years of manipulation and deception centering on the betrayal of a Soka Gakkai lawyer named Masatomo Yamazaki.


An understanding of Yamazaki's role in manipulating the priesthood is essential to gaining insight into the problems that occurred between the priesthood and the Soka Gakkai in the 1970s and, more important, into the fundamental nature of the priesthood itself. It also sheds light on the enormous influence of the media on people's perception of a religious movement that seeks to establish deep roots into society.

There had been factions within the priesthood who disapproved of the Soka Gakkai's behavior as independent, self-reliant believers. For the most part, faith in Nichiren Buddhism was dormant until the appearance of the Soka Gakkai. Nichiren Shoshu members, like most Japanese Buddhist believers, had long adopted a passive approach and deferred most of their religious practice to priests. Their Buddhist experience mostly centered on ceremonial events conducted at temples by priests, such as funerals, weddings and memorials.

Religious scholar Richard Seager, in his interview with Hosho Shiina, a third generation Nichiren Shoshu priest, explains: "When

the Soka Gakkai entered the picture,' he [Shiina] says, 'Nichiren suddenly became a living presence in the religious life of laity and believers.' Its impact on the established community was 'an unprecedented event. There were many within the priesthood who had never heard the word *shakubuku*.' Toda's demand that laypeople have an informed commitment was shocking and anxiety-provoking. 'It was literally the heavens were astonished and the earth moved!' he says" (*Encountering the Dharma*, pp. 138–39).

## An Atmosphere of Mistrust



These were, for the most part, rooted in the priesthood's fundamental mistrust of the Soka Gakkai and its deep-seated insecurity about its role and purpose.

This underlying resentment would come to the surface time and again over the tenure of President Ikeda's leadership. Later it became clear that fanning the flames of discontent, was Masatomo Yamazaki. He became an advisor to the priesthood and liaison between the laity and the head temple. He used his position to advance his own interests for money and power.

Many issues arose between the priesthood and the Soka Gakkai during the 1970s. These were, for the most

part, rooted in the priesthood's fundamental mistrust of the Soka Gakkai and its deep-seated insecurity about its role and purpose. There was also disagreement within the priesthood over how to interpret the significance of the Grand Main Temple completed in 1972. This and other issues were greatly complicated and aggravated by the machinations of Yamazaki.

The priesthood could not appreciate the fact that lay believers were now gaining a sufficiently profound grasp of Buddhist principles to interpret the writings of Nichiren Daishonin on their own, without clerical instruction, thus successfully convincing many others of the greatness of the Daishonin's Buddhism. The priesthood's inability to explain Buddhism to a broad and diverse audience and its diminishing role in guiding lay believers exacerbated the priests' insecurity.

This greatly contributed to friction with the Gakkai in the 1970s.

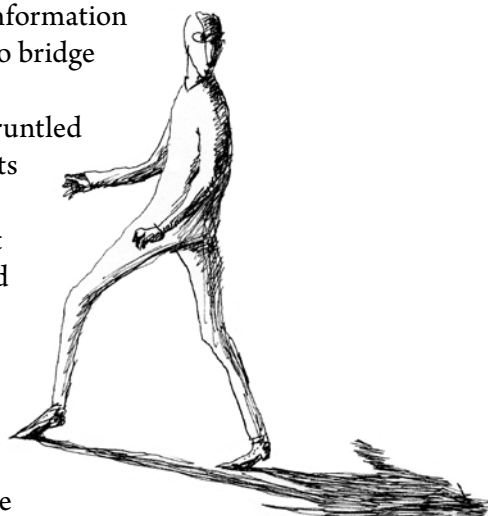
Keenly aware of this atmosphere of mistrust, the lawyer Yamazaki took steps to aggravate the situation with his personal gain in mind.

The Soka Gakkai was experiencing extensive, ongoing media attacks, most of which were concentrated on President Ikeda himself. Yamazaki cleverly took advantage of this media influence and used it to undermine the Gakkai's efforts to spread Nichiren Buddhism. In this sense, the temple issue during the 1970s was a painful yet valuable experience for the Soka Gakkai in terms of promoting its Buddhist movement in an increasingly information-oriented society.

Yamazaki's greed and corruption may be summed up in his view of the Soka Gakkai as a money-making opportunity. For example, in 1975, Yamazaki earned a handsome profit from a real estate deal involving the priesthood and the Gakkai. He persuaded Taisei-ji to sell a large tract of land in Fujinomiya City to his own paper company at a low price. Yamazaki then sold the property to a developer who, in turn, sold it to the Gakkai for a memorial park.

By leaking misinformation to the priesthood, he also aroused its mistrust of the Gakkai and then contrived to position himself as a mediator to resolve the conflict. In the mid-1970s, Yamazaki created the impression within the priesthood that the Gakkai was trying to control it. Throughout the rest of the seventies, while still in the role of mediator, he continued to leak misinformation in an attempt to sabotage the Gakkai's efforts to bridge the gap and create harmony with the priests.

Yamazaki also encouraged a group of disgruntled young priests to attack the Gakkai. These priests refused to perform funeral services for Gakkai members, while at the same time asserting that unless lay believers had their funeral conducted by a Nichiren Shoshu priest, they would be damned to the hell of incessant suffering. With such threats, those priests encouraged members to quit the Gakkai and join a temple parish. Those anti-Gakkai priests later formed a group called the Shoshinkai (The



Group of Correct Faith).

In January 1978, when the situation started to improve, Yamazaki wrote a document titled “Letter from a Certain Believer,” which he submitted to the priesthood. In it, he alleged that the Soka Gakkai was systematically promoting the view that its president was the true Buddha and he instructed the priesthood how to control the Soka Gakkai by leveraging its authority. As this document circulated within the priesthood, the situation intensified.

The Soka Gakkai continued to try to restore its relationship with the priesthood. The situation proceeded toward a resolution when 66th High Priest Nittatsu stated on November 7, 1978: “From now on, let us realize true harmonious unity between the priesthood and laity and protect our school.”

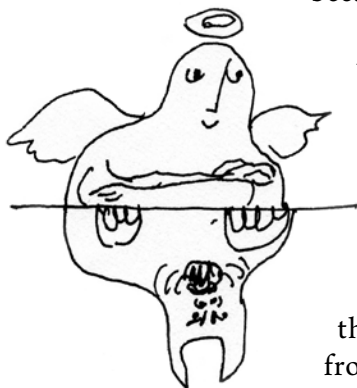
Disgruntled priests, however, continued to attack the Soka Gakkai and to encourage Soka Gakkai members to leave the organization and join temple parishes. To end the priesthood’s attack on the Soka Gakkai and avoid further confusion, Ikeda announced his resignation on April 24, 1979, and Hiroshi Hojo became the fourth president of the Soka Gakkai.

## Nittatsu Dies Unexpectedly

On July 22 that year, Nittatsu died suddenly. Shin’no Abe, then the general administrator of Nichiren Shoshu, claimed to have received the lineage of high priest from Nittatsu. With no one contesting his claim to the high office, Abe adopted the name Nikken. Nikken became the sixty-seventh high priest on August 6, 1979.

Yamazaki at first curried favor with Nikken so that he could continue to manipulate the priesthood and exert his influence over the Soka Gakkai.

After his attempts failed, however, Yamazaki started questioning the legitimacy of Nikken’s succession and attacking him in the media. For example, in the weekly tabloid *Shukan Buns-hun* dated November 20, 1980, Yamazaki alleged that Nikken never received the lineage of high priest from his predecessor. Furthermore, Shoshinkai priests




started to attack Nikken's legitimacy as high priest. In January 1981, Shoshinkai priests filed a lawsuit against Nikken, seeking to nullify his status as high priest. The following year, Nikken expelled about 180 Shoshinkai priests from the priesthood.

Meanwhile, Yamazaki resigned his position as legal counsel for the Soka Gakkai in March 1980. After his resignation, he started to attack the Soka Gakkai overtly in the media and incited the priesthood to do the same.

At that time, he was in possession of a large volume of the Soka Gakkai's internal documents, which had been stolen by Takashi Harashima, the former Study Department chief who betrayed the Soka Gakkai in league with Yamazaki. Yamazaki, burdened with large business debts, decided to extort money from the Soka Gakkai by threatening to use the contents of those internal documents to fuel attacks by the priesthood and the media.

The circumstances surrounding the Soka Gakkai at this time were complex. Around the end of 1979, Yamazaki brought several of those stolen documents to the attention of the media and the priesthood. One of them was a memorandum written in June 1974 by Hiroshi Hojo, then Soka Gakkai vice president. In 1974, the Soka Gakkai proposed to the priesthood the establishment of a Nichiren Shoshu International Center to better support its rapidly increasing overseas membership. The priesthood, however, vehemently opposed the idea, suspecting that the Soka Gakkai was attempting to control the priesthood under the umbrella of the proposed NSIC.

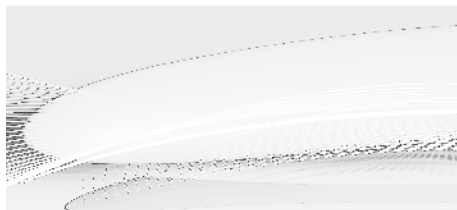
Hojo, out of deep frustration, wrote a report to Ikeda, characterizing the priesthood as "a serious obstacle to kosen-rufu." He also wrote in the report: "I think that in the long run, we have no choice but to separate wisely. [The difference between the priesthood and the Soka Gakkai] is essentially similar to that of Catholicism and Protestantism." Ikeda admonished Hojo at that time for emotional-



Disgruntled priests, however, continued to attack the Soka Gakkai and to encourage Soka Gakkai members to leave the organization and join temple parishes.



ism and rejected his idea, and the Soka Gakkai continued to support the priesthood. When this memorandum was leaked to the media and the priesthood around the end of 1979, the Soka Gakkai found itself



“There are two kinds of wisdom, correct and perverse. No matter how wise a person may appear, if his assertions are warped you should not listen to him.”

in an awkward position since, to explain the context of Hojo’s document, the Soka Gakkai would have to reveal the obstinate emotion-alism exhibited by the priesthood regarding the NSIC. Bound by its role to support and protect the priesthood, the Soka Gakkai was thus defenseless against the onslaught from the media and the anti-Gakkai priests.

When Yamazaki attempted to blackmail the Soka Gakkai threatening to leak more of the Soka Gakkai’s internal documents in April 1980, the bitter experience of the Hojo report was still fresh in the minds of the organization’s senior officials. By this time, they had also become keenly aware of Yamazaki’s cunning at mixing factual information with falsehoods and engineering information leaks

to elicit a negative response. Because its relationship with the priesthood was still fragile, the Soka Gakkai expected a more virulent attack from the media and the priesthood, one that would ultimately hurt the members. Soka Gakkai senior officials made the painful decision to comply with Yamazaki’s demand and pay him 300 million yen.

When Yamazaki demanded another 500 million yen, however, the Soka Gakkai leadership decided to report everything to the authorities and press charges against Yamazaki for extortion. In January 1981, Yamazaki was arrested and, on March 26, 1985, convicted of extortion in the Tokyo District Court. He was sentenced to three years in prison.

## Defeated From Within by Greed and Arrogance

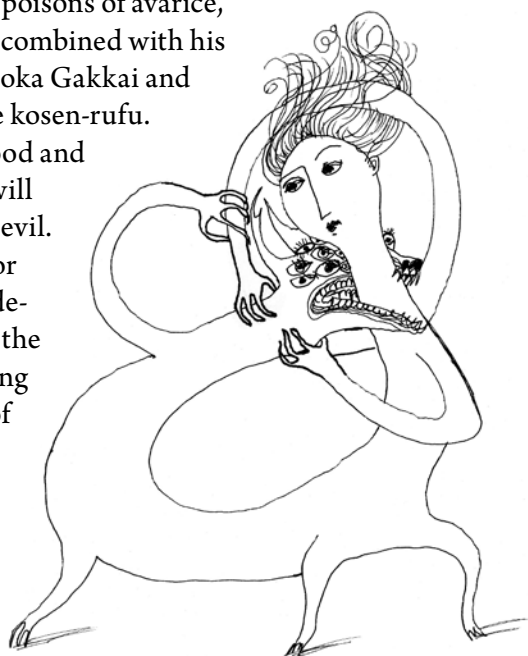
After his release from prison, Yamazaki allied himself with Nikken, whom he had previously attacked, as well as with anti-Gakkai politicians and journalists in his vendetta against the Gakkai.

In his New Year's message for 1991, even as he was hatching his plan to disband the Soka Gakkai, Nikken wrote: "Also worthy of special mention about President Ikeda's leadership is that he has greatly advanced worldwide kosen-rufu.... The many offerings to the head temple and the donation of local temples begun by the Soka Gakkai around the time of President Toda have been diligently carried on by President Ikeda, whose contributions have earned numerous words of praise from my predecessor" (January 1991 *Seikyo Times*, p. 3). As evident in his message, Nikken could not deny Ikeda's unprecedented contributions to the global spread of Nichiren Buddhism and to the priesthood's prosperity although, when he wrote this message, he had already decided to expel President Ikeda and destroy the Soka Gakkai.

Nichiren Daishonin writes about the nature of people like Yamazaki and the priesthood: "There are two kinds of wisdom, correct and perverse. No matter how wise a person may appear, if his assertions are warped you should not listen to him. Nor should you follow priests merely because they are venerable or of high rank" (WND-1, 1028).

Ultimately Yamazaki succumbed to the poisons of avarice, anger and foolishness. Greed and arrogance combined with his position of power and influence within the Soka Gakkai and priesthood led him to put self-interest before kosen-rufu. From the Buddhist view of the oneness of good and evil, it is not improbable that such a person will exhibit the behavior of devilish functions or evil.

Buddhism does not view good and evil or Buddha and devil as a duality, as existing independent of one another. Rather, it expounds the view of the "oneness of good and evil," viewing them as inseparable realities of life, neither of which exists without the other. Where there is one, the other is an ever-present potential. As Nichiren writes, "Good and evil have been inherent in life since time without beginning" ("The Treatment of Illness," WND-1, 1113). Since both good and evil



are present in all life, it becomes each person's continual challenge to encourage good and stem evil.

President Ikeda talks about this darkness within in his lecture on "Letter to the Brothers": "Negative influences that obstruct people's faith in the Lotus Sutra are personified by 'men of wis-

dom possessed by evil demons' and that these influences are actually the workings of the devil king of the sixth heaven. But if they are people of wisdom, how then can the devil king of the sixth heaven take possession of them? The reason is that they are not defeated from without but from within; they are defeated by the devilish nature known as fundamental darkness innate in life" (Jan.–Feb. 2010 *Living Buddhism*, p. 83).

Although the Soka Gakkai had witnessed numerous unmistakable signs of corruption and authoritarianism within the priesthood, espe-

cially during the late 1970s, the Soka Gakkai continued to increase its level of support for the priesthood. In this regard, President Ikeda talks about the basic stance of the Soka Gakkai before the most recent outbreak of the temple issue at the end of 1990: "We protected the priesthood with the utmost sincerity. In recent years, as well, even while confronted with the reality of the decadence and runaway greed of priests, we have all along made known our wish that the priesthood purify itself" (from his speech on May 3, 1992, in the June 8, 1992, *World Tribune*, p. 5). Unfortunately, those years of tolerance by the Soka Gakkai toward the priesthood were completely betrayed the moment Nikken declared his true intentions to disband the Soka Gakkai.



## Chapter Seven

# A Revolution Dawns

An Essay by SGI President Ikeda

*The SGI president remembers 1990, the year that the priesthood tried to take control of the Soka Gakkai and started to negate Nichiren Daishonin's humanistic teachings. "For the sake of kosen-rufu, we of the Soka Gakkai simply could not allow the Daishonin's teachings to be trampled in this manner," President Ikeda writes. "The Daishonin's Buddhism exists for all the world's people. We rallied to defend the Daishonin's spirit, and we rose as one. It marked the dawn of a new religious revolution." (This article appeared in the Feb. 5, 1999 World Tribune, p.4)*

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is the roar of the spirit of that great musical genius, who proclaimed, "At the end of suffering, there is joy!" It is a sublime, eternal hymn that links all humanity as brothers and sisters, a rousing paean of the people.

On Dec. 12, 1998, I was fortunate to enjoy once again the Soka University students' performance of the Ninth Symphony, which has now become an annual tradition. It was this same symphony that was performed on Oct. 3, 1990, as a song of victory celebrating Germany's reunification, which was finally attained after such a long, hard struggle.

It was a few months later, in mid-December 1990, that a document from the Nichiren Shoshu Administrative Office titled "Questions Regarding the Speech of Honorary President Ikeda at the 35th Headquarters Leaders Meeting" was delivered to the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. Among other things, the document claimed that singing "Ode to Joy," the Ninth Symphony's choral section, was slander of the Law; it was tantamount to praising non-Buddhist teachings, to venerating Christianity. The priesthood took exception to the fact that I had suggested at the meeting in question that we put on a large-

scale choral performance of “Ode to Joy” in the future.

The Nichiren Shoshu document criticized me for saying things I never said and was an attempt to brand me with the labels of slanderer of the Law and slanderer of the high priest. We sought to discuss these claims with the priesthood, but the cowardly priests hid and refused to come forth to talk.

Then, at the end of 1990, under the pretext of revising Nichiren Shoshu’s regulations, they eliminated the position of head of all Nichiren Shoshu lay organizations, the post I held, and effectively dismissed me.

“They wanted to get me out of the way”

Their aim was clear. They wanted to get me out of the way, to destroy the Soka Gakkai, and, under the cloak of priestly authority, to control all the Gakkai members as if they were their personal slaves.

The Nikken sect began propounding heretical doctrines found nowhere in Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings. They declared, for instance, that the high priest and the Dai-Gohonzon are “two indivisible entities of the object of fundamental respect.” Their plan was to



create a hierarchy of power and control, with the high priest at the apex, followed by the rest of the priesthood, who stood above the lay believers and dominated them.

This was in complete violation of the Daishonin's teachings, which uphold the principles of the dignity and equality of all human beings and state that we are all treasure towers, we are all children of the Buddha.

If we had allowed the priesthood to do this, the Daishonin's Buddhism would have become a false religion that served only as an instrument of oppression and harm. It also soon became clear that the Nikken sect was guilty of an astonishing number of violations of the Daishonin's teachings — for example, Nikken, high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, had erected a new ancestral tombstone in a Zen temple cemetery. Stories of the greed of the clergy in selling their services at funerals and in memorial tablets for the deceased, along with an astonishing number of incidents of corruption and degeneracy — including profligate spending and licentious behavior — surfaced one after another.

For the sake of kosen-rufu, we of the Soka Gakkai simply could not allow the Daishonin's teachings to be trampled in this manner. The Daishonin's Buddhism exists for all the world's people. We rallied to defend the Daishonin's spirit, and we rose as one. It marked the dawn of a new religious revolution.

On Nov. 28 the following year, 1991, the Nikken sect excommunicated the Soka Gakkai. What madness! It was the Soka Gakkai that had always upheld the Daishonin's teachings to the letter. The mask of the priests was ripped away by this action, and their true nature as the minions of hell was revealed.

But the Soka Gakkai members did not quail. We knew, from our reading of the Daishonin's writings, that this madness of Nikken was an example of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven having entered the body of a high-ranking priest in an effort to destroy Buddhism.

The Soka Gakkai is an organization of people completely dedicated to advancing the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law, thereby carrying out the Buddha's will and decree. The Nikken sect, on the other hand, in excommunicating the Soka Gakkai with its own hand cut off the true lineage of faith and returned to the vile

behavior it had exhibited during World War II, when it denigrated the Daishonin's spirit and utterly betrayed his teachings.

## Soka Gakkai Embraces Spiritual Independence

For the Gakkai, the excommunication released us from the chains by which the envious, scheming Nikken sect had sought to control the Daishonin's followers and allowed us to claim our true spiritual independence.

Seven years have passed since then. The outcome of the struggle of good and evil and the workings of the law of cause and effect have been strict and uncompromising. The decline of the crazed, destructive Nikken sect is clear.

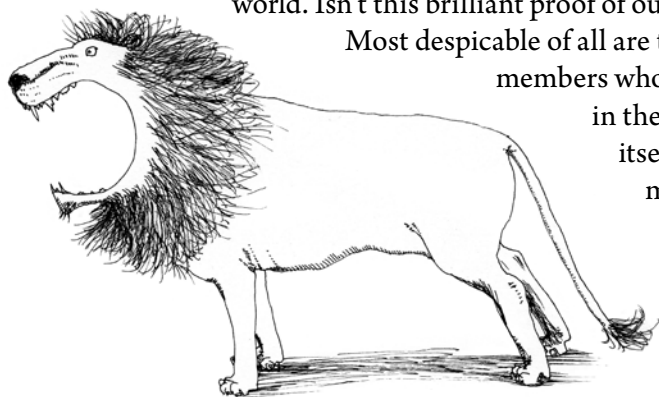
The victims, unfortunately, are the lay believers who practice with the temple, who are not aware of the evil heresy of the Nikken sect and have been deceived by the priests.

We declare confidently to all: Look at the exciting, joyful activities of our comrades spreading the Daishonin's teachings throughout the world! Listen to their bright song of hope and life, filled to overflowing with benefit!

The new humanism of the Soka Gakkai, derived from the Daishonin's Buddhism, is linking people around the globe, transcending national and ethnic boundaries, and earning praise from all as the light of hope for the new century.

Leaders of diverse fields who seek a philosophy of humanism and peace come to the Gakkai in a constant stream from all over the world. Isn't this brilliant proof of our truth and rightness?

Most despicable of all are those former Soka Gakkai members who have betrayed their comrades in the organization and the Gakkai itself, although they owe us so much, in order to curry favor with the priests. Simón Bolívar, the great liberator of Latin America, once said, "Forgetting one's debt is the greatest crime a person





can commit.” First Soka Gakkai President Tsunesaburo Makiguchi used to say, “The final fate of all traitors is a degrading story of suffering and ignominy.”

Second President Josei Toda also took a harsh view of ingratitude and treachery. Though in one respect he seemed easy-going and an accepting man, he was very strict about the conduct and behavior of youth. He believed that the time of one’s youth is vital in building the foundation for the rest of one’s life. When it came to the essentials, he could be quite ferocious.

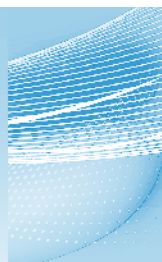
Once, one of his disciples told a lie. When Mr. Toda learned of this, he took the youth to task, thundering: “Are lying and deceit any way for a young person to behave?! Have you become a fox?” He was the epitome of paternal strictness.

He once told a young man who was always maneuvering and striving to look good in the organization without making any effort: “If you keep this up, you’re going to come to a pitiful end in life. I can discern no desire on your part to live with decency and honor. You are deceitful, and in the end, you’re the one who will suffer for it.” He said this out of great compassion, out of a deep wish to prevent the young man from going further astray and losing his faith.

How wonderful it is, in every age, for a person to have a true teacher!

Mr. Toda often used to say about traitors: “Leave those lowly losers be. Betraying the Gakkai is betraying the Daishonin. In the end, they’ll receive the punishment of the Buddha [negative retribution in accord with the strict workings of the law of cause and effect], you’ll see.” Right human conduct means fighting against evil and cutting it off at its root. The tricolor Soka Gakkai banner of victory waves in the skies of the new century, and a song of joy resounds throughout the heavens. The grand march of a new year, of a new century of Soka, has begun.

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## Chapter Eight

# Spiritual Independence— Freed from an Authoritarian Priesthood

*This is a summary chronology of some of the incidents that took place as the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood under High Priest Nikken attempted to remove SGI President Ikeda from his position as head of the Soka Gakkai. Unlike their efforts of 1979, this action resulted in the priesthood removing themselves from the Buddhist community dedicated to kosen-rufu. It was later revealed that all their actions were part of a plan to gain total control of the laity. The plan was called “Operation C”—“C” referred to “cut” President Ikeda off from the members.*

### Timeline for the Second Priesthood Issue and Operation C

- In March 1990, the priesthood, without any discussion with the Soka Gakkai, arbitrarily announced that it was increasing the amounts of the monetary offerings it would be charging for performing various religious services for lay believers. For example, it raised the offering required for receiving the Gohonzon by 50 percent, and doubled the offering required for inscribing memorial tablets (Jpn. toba) and conducting perpetual memorial services for the deceased.
- On December 13, 1990, at a meeting between priests and Soka Gakkai leaders, General Administrator Fujimoto confronted President Akiya with a questionnaire based on a recording of President Ikeda’s November 16th speech and stated he wanted a written response within a week.
- President Akiya replied that he could not respond to an unauthorized recording and suggested that, if there were any issues, they should resolve them through dialogue. Fujimoto rejected this suggestion, and the questionnaire was mailed and received by President Akiya.

■ The questionnaire was titled “Questions Regarding President Ikeda’s Speech at the 35th Headquarters Leaders Meeting” and referred to the following points:

- 1) He criticized and insulted High Priest Nikken
- 2) He made light of priests
- 3) He denied the four dictums of Nichiren
- 4) He encouraged the singing of “Ode to Joy” in German from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. The priesthood condemned this as praising non-Buddhist teachings.

■ December 25, 1990, just prior to President Ikeda’s dismissal, Nikken met at the head temple with active anti-Soka Gakkai priest Kojun Takahashi and his brother Isao Dan, an anti-Soka Gakkai tabloid media reporter. The high priest thanked Dan for his long-standing critical coverage of the Soka Gakkai and asked him to further intensify his written attacks. Nikken also expressed his desire to maintain “200,000 Gakkai members” as a result of expelling Ikeda from Nichiren Shoshu. He figured this was sufficient to ensure a foundation of financial contributions.

■ The Soka Gakkai repeatedly tried to engage the priesthood in dialogue over their concerns, but the priesthood refused. Ultimately the priesthood held an emergency special assembly on December 27th and decided to:

- 1) Dismiss Honorary President Ikeda from his position as the head of all Nichiren Shoshu lay societies.
- 2) Dismiss President Akiya from his leadership position of all lay societies.
- 3) Revise the “Rules of Nichiren Shoshu,” adding a provision that lay believers would be dismissed if they were to “criticize, slander or speak ill of the Chief Administrator (High Priest) through words or writings.”

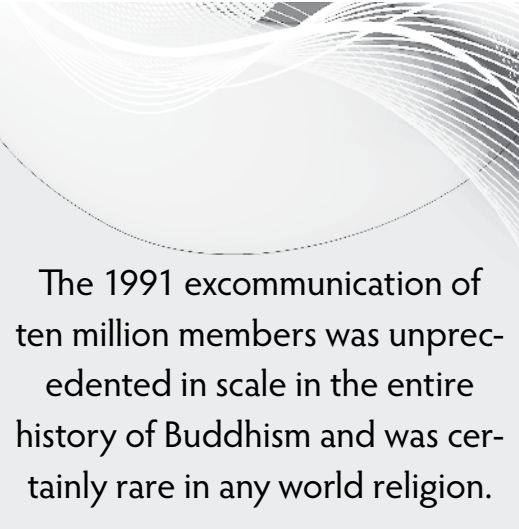
■ On January 1, 1991, the Soka Gakkai replied to the priesthood’s questionnaire, pointing out in writing that it was based on an

inaccurate transcription of the tape recording. Later (on January 12th), the priesthood not only admitted that there were mistakes in their version of the speech but also withdrew the questionnaire itself.

■ With the original and fundamental reason for removing Honorary President Ikeda from his position as the head of all lay believers negated, it became apparent that the “Questionnaire” was an excuse to unjustly criticize the Soka Gakkai and take measures against it.

■ In January 1991, seeking another pretext for the priesthood’s attacks on President Ikeda, Nikken criticized him for statements made

on October 12, 1968. President Ikeda had described the Grand Main Temple as “the high sanctuary of the true teaching of the Lotus Sutra.” Nikken alleged that President Ikeda had attempted to define the significance of the Grand Main Temple even before the sixty-sixth high priest Nittatsu. Nikken asserted that Ikeda’s statement demonstrated arrogance in overstepping the bounds of a lay believer. The priesthood later found out that Nittatsu had indeed made statements about the significance of the Grand Main Temple as the high sanctuary prior to October 1968.



The 1991 excommunication of ten million members was unprecedented in scale in the entire history of Buddhism and was certainly rare in any world religion.

■ The priesthood continued to implement unjust measures against the Soka Gakkai in 1991:

- 1) March 5: They began encouraging overseas members to connect directly to temples.
- 2) March 16: They announced that pilgrimages requested through the Soka Gakkai would be rejected from July.
- 3) July 21: They announced that they would also officially create temple members in Japan.
- 4) November 7: The priesthood sent a “Remonstrance and Order

to Disband” to the Soka Gakkai.

- 5) November 27 (the 28th in the U.S.): The priesthood sent a “Notification of Expulsion” (excommunication) to the Soka Gakkai.
- 6) August 11, 1992: They notified Honorary President Ikeda of his “dismissal (excommunication) as lay believer.”

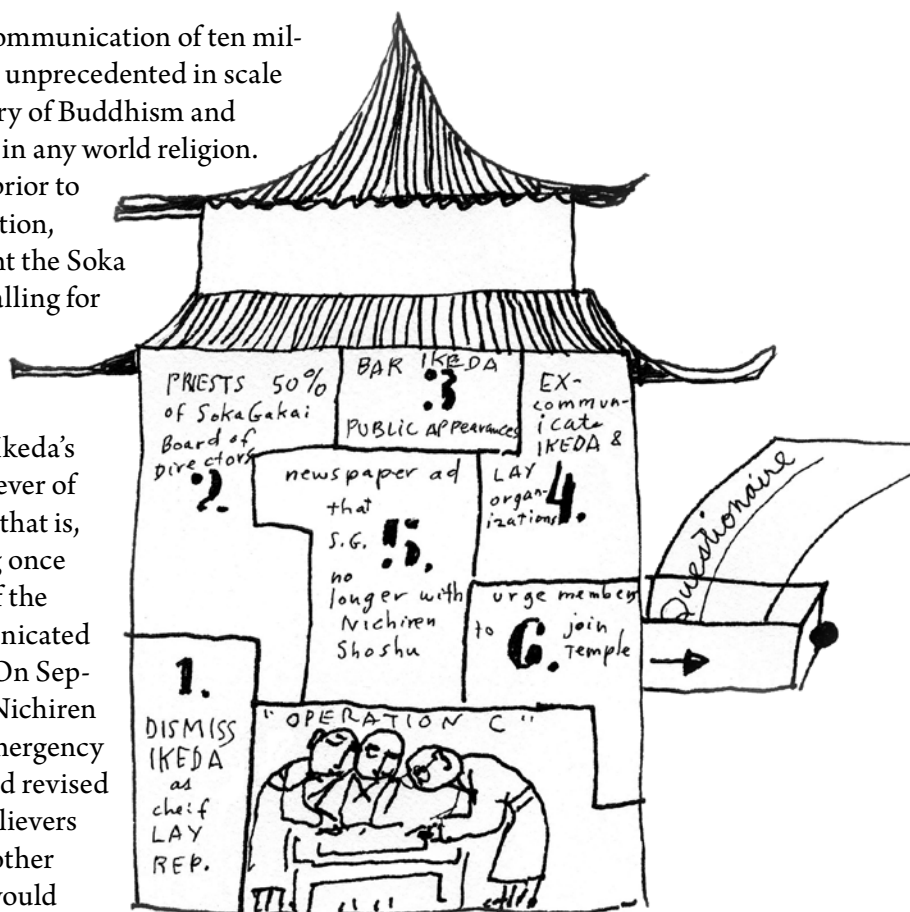
■ January 1994: The origin of “Operation C” became known. With this, it was apparent that the series of unjust measures by the priesthood toward the Soka Gakkai were part of a detailed conspiracy planned beforehand by Nikken to destroy the harmonious unity of believers.

## Operation C

The 1991 excommunication of ten million members was unprecedented in scale in the entire history of Buddhism and was certainly rare in any world religion.

On November 7, prior to the excommunication, the priesthood sent the Soka Gakkai a notice calling for its dissolution.

On July 4, 1992, the priesthood revoked Daisaku Ikeda’s status as a lay believer of Nichiren Shoshu, that is, excommunicating once again the leader of the already-excommunicated lay organization. On September 29, 1997, Nichiren Shoshu held an emergency council session and revised its rules so that believers who belonged to other religious groups would



lose their status as believers unless they terminated their religious affiliations before the end of November. (The priesthood maintained that it had excommunicated the Soka Gakkai organization but not its members.) Thus, Soka Gakkai members were once again expelled from Nichiren Shoshu on November 30, 1997. These repeated efforts to excommunicate SGI members demonstrated the failure of the priesthood's measures as well as its frustration.

Behind the priesthood's self-destructive decision to excommunicate the SGI was the high priest's insecurity over the control of the ever-growing international lay Buddhist movement as well as his animosity toward its leader. Although there was an underlying feeling of discontent and mistrust among priests toward the lay organization, something that had existed since the 1970s, what directly motivated the priesthood's irrational behavior toward the SGI was sixty-seventh high priest Nikken Abe's animosity.

On July 16, 1990, Nikken and his close associates met in secrecy at Taisei-ji's branch office in Nishikata, Tokyo. They agreed on a plan to enfeeble the Soka Gakkai and gain control

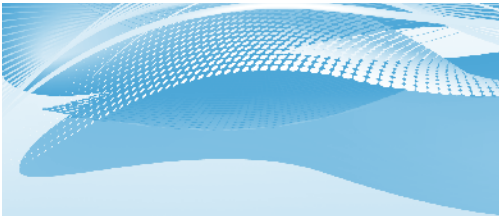


over its membership. The plan was code-named Operation C, whose meaning Nikken himself disclosed to one priest as “Operation Cut”—to “cut off Ikeda from Nichiren Shoshu and thereby from the Soka Gakkai membership.” In other words, they wanted to sever the relationship between mentor and disciple.

The existence of Operation C, denied by the priesthood, was proven when conference notes taken by Jitoku Kawabe, a senior priest and participant in the Nishikata meeting, were made public.

The plan described in detail steps necessary to achieve its goal: control of the Soka Gakkai membership. The basic steps in the plan included: 1) dismiss Ikeda as chief lay representative; 2) demand that priests comprise half of the Soka Gakkai’s Board of Directors; 3) bar Ikeda from public appearances and prohibit reports on his activities in Soka Gakkai publications; 4) excommunicate Ikeda and the lay organization if the Soka Gakkai does not accept these demands; 5) run an advertisement in major newspapers for one week announcing that the Soka Gakkai is no longer associated with Nichiren Shoshu; and 6) urge members to secede from the Soka Gakkai and directly join their temple parish.

From the standpoint of Buddhism, the priesthood’s attempt to destroy the SGI can be seen as an unavoidable obstacle to the spread of Buddhism as foretold in the Lotus Sutra and predicted and experienced by Nichiren Daishonin himself. In “Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King,” the twenty-third chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni says to the bodhisattva Constellation King Flower: “After I have passed into extinction, in the last five-hundred-year period you must spread it [the Lotus Sutra] abroad widely throughout Jambudvīpa and never allow it to be cut off, nor must you allow evil devils, the devil’s people,...demons, or others to seize the advantage!” (LSOC, 330).



Behind the priesthood’s self-destructive decision to excommunicate the SGI was the high priest’s insecurity over the control of the ever-growing international lay Buddhist movement as well as his animosity toward its leader.





## Chapter 9

# KEY POINTS

## A Struggle that Continues Forever

- ▶ The incident known as the “priesthood issue,” which took place 20 years ago, repeats a drama that occurred during Shakyamuni’s time and is continuing today, and will continue into the future in one form or another.
- ▶ Even though Shakyamuni, Nichiren, Makiguchi and Toda won victories in their time, today, under the leadership of President Ikeda, we are still battling to achieve another victory.
- ▶ This is an inevitable struggle for justice and victory over the three powerful enemies, which predictably appear as explained in Nichiren’s writings.
- ▶ This struggle is our mission as “votaries of the Lotus Sutra” to establish a state of absolute happiness for society and ourselves.

## What value is there in reviewing errors of the past?

**First**, through understanding the history of Nichiren Buddhism, we can view the present condition of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood in context. The current problems within the priesthood that have resulted in its attacks on the SGI did not begin suddenly in 1990 when Nikken hatched his plot to do away with the lay organization.

**Second**, the benefit of learning about the Fuji School’s past is our realization that at the core of the priesthood’s corruption lie human weaknesses we are all familiar with: arrogance, jealousy and greed. Cloistered behind the veil of clerical authority for centuries, these delusions became deeply rooted in the collective psyche of the priesthood. This is not a unique situation in the history of religion. Any religious movement can become corrupt and degenerate when its leaders cease to be diligent in combating those human frailties within themselves.

**Third**, by tracking the tortuous path of the Fuji School over the past seven centuries, we can better grasp the significance of the SGI and its mission in a broad historical and global context. When Makiguchi and Toda founded the Soka Gakkai in 1930, Nichiren Buddhism had been existing in form but not in substance; that is, its practitioners had not been dedicated to its spread for the happiness of all people. And until Soka Gakkai members brought Nichiren Buddhism to the rest of the world. Nichiren's promise for the global spread of his teaching had rung hollow. It was the Soka Gakkai that revived Nichiren Buddhism after almost seven centuries of dormancy.

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## Reflecting on the Past, Looking to the Future

*It is clear that from the beginning the founders of the Soka Gakkai understood the shortcomings and devious nature of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. And yet, there was an opportunity to support reform within the school. Over the years, there were efforts on both sides to achieve unity of purpose for the sake of kosen-rufu.*

The Soka Gakkai had only one goal in mind from the beginning—to propagate Nichiren Buddhism to relieve the suffering of all people and establish peace throughout the world.

The priesthood was conflicted over their attachment to traditional views of the clergy-laity relationship and the progressive nature of the new Soka Gakkai. On one hand they appreciated the support of this new influx of believers and on the other, they weren't sure how to handle a pro-active lay organization taking full responsibility for kosen-rufu. As their economic health improved so did their desire to reassert the total control over the laity they had exercised in the past.

They became blinded by their own arrogance and chose to put their own interests above the interests of the members

and kosen-rufu. The late Dr. David Norton, an eminent professor of philosophy at the University of Delaware, commented [in 1991]: “The priesthood, in its attack on the activities of the Soka Gakkai, is guilty of what can only be described as profound myopia, or even blindness.”

Once the priesthood’s deceptions and schemes to take over the laity became apparent, the Soka Gakkai was forced to re-examine its position. The post-Nichiren idea of mysticism surrounding the office and person of the high priest was contrary to the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, and the Soka Gakkai made that point clear.

Although the relationship had often been contentious behind the scenes, it served no purpose to expose the members or general public to these arguments as long as the overall goal was embraced. But once the priesthood succumbed to self-interest over kosen-rufu, the Soka Gakkai had to re-examine its position. During this time, both sides make public statements in support of the other.

Generally speaking, past statements by the three Soka Gakkai presidents fall into these categories:

- 1) They reflect a sincere desire to rebuild and support a priesthood devastated by World War II.
- 2) They reflect a sincere desire for the priesthood to reform itself.
- 3) They were made in spite of the shortcomings of the priesthood for the greater good of kosen-rufu.

Like any other religious movement, there are light and dark sides in the Fuji School’s seven-century history. The school has seen some exemplary priests who earnestly strove to extol, protect and spread Nichiren Buddhism. Nikko Shonin, the school’s founder, upheld his mentor’s intent against the corruption and distortions perpetrated by the five senior priests whom Nichiren designated to help Nikko Shonin lead the Buddhist order after his death. By taking an uncompromising stance toward the five errant senior priests, Nikko Shonin proved the validity of the transmission of Buddhism that he had received from Nichiren. Nikko’s legitimacy, in other words, rested entirely upon his faith and understanding, which he demonstrated in his practice and efforts of propagation not only when Nichiren was alive, but also after his death. The transmission of Buddhism from Nichiren to Nikko Shonin, in this sense, serves as a prototype showing present

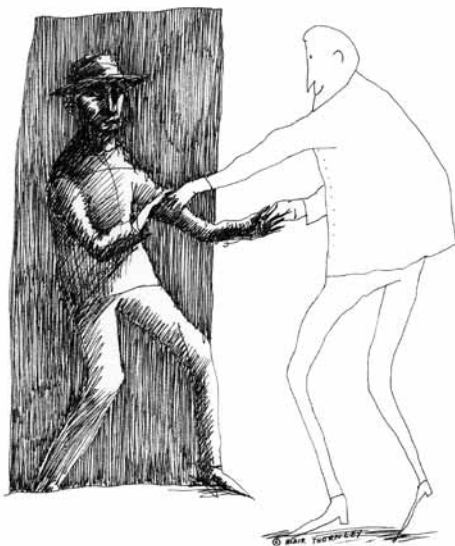
practitioners how they may inherit and practice Nichiren Buddhism.


Another exemplary priest in the history of the Fuji School is Nichikan, the twenty-sixth high priest. Like Nikko Shonin, Nichikan proved himself as Nichiren's true disciple by challenging the erroneous teachings that his predecessors had brought into the school. Just as Nikko Shonin strictly pointed out the errors of the five senior priests in worshipping Shakyamuni's statue as an object of devotion, Nichikan refuted the same errors committed by his predecessors and reestablished the Gohonzon as the correct and only object of devotion in Nichiren Buddhism. Without Nikko and Nichikan, it would be hard to imagine that anyone today could have a correct understanding or practice of Nichiren Buddhism. Their legacies serve as a guide to our practice.

### "Disrupting the harmonious body of believers"

As we have recounted here, the forces of fundamental darkness that would hinder or prevent our Buddhist practice appear from both within and without the Buddhist Order. Those that have appeared from within to disrupt the unity of believers are, for example, Devadatta, the five senior priests who betrayed Nichiren, Masatomo Yamazaki who used his influence within the Soka Gakkai for personal gain and Nichiren Shoshu High Priest Nikken.

Unity is a primary concern in Buddhism. Among the five cardinal sins mentioned in various Buddhist texts, which include murdering one's parents and injuring a Buddha, is causing disunity in the community of believers. Nichiren Daishonin wrote frankly about those believers who betrayed him and attempted to disrupt his followers. In "The Workings of Brahma and Shakra," he writes: "Sho-bo, Noto-bo, and the lay nun of Nagoe were once Nichiren's disciples. Greedy, cowardly, and foolish, they nonetheless pass themselves off as wise persons. When persecutions befell me, they took advantage of these to convince many of





You have as yet  
tapped only  
a fraction of the  
boundless power  
of Buddhahood  
you possess, and  
revealed only  
a tiny fraction of  
your limitless  
Buddha wisdom...

my followers to drop out” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 800).

SGI President Ikeda warns us about those who attempt to disrupt and even to destroy our organization: “We must rigorously condemn the grave offense of disrupting the harmonious body of believers. Our denouncing wrongdoing and teaching the correct path is also in the best interest of those who commit such offenses. It is vital that we thoroughly rebuke and deal stringently with wrongdoing in the organization, so that our juniors will not repeat the same errors. That’s true compassion. In the past, we have seen leaders and influential figures in our ranks who, led astray by ambition and self-interest, abandoned their faith, betrayed their fellow members, and tried to destroy the Soka Gakkai” (September 23, 2005, *World Tribune*, p. 1).

Buddhism tells us that people will attempt to thwart our efforts for kosen-rufu including some from among our own ranks. Nichiren writes, “The Buddha tells us that only the worms born from the body of the lion itself feed on the lion” (WND-1, 570). To some degree or another, all of us must deal with the tendency to succumb to egocentricity and the innate darkness of greed, anger and foolishness.

In “The Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” Nichiren does not say “While you are accomplishing kosen-rufu, it would be nice if you create unity.” He states clearly that the spiritual bond of unity based on faith is “the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate Law of life and death” and “the true goal of Nichiren’s propagation.” This is a goal that requires strenuous exertion on our part. The Daishonin’s instruction to transcend “all differences among themselves” (WND-1, 217) is not a passive activity. It does not mean that we must all think alike or cannot hold different opinions. What it means is that we transcend these differences by manifesting our desire for kosen-rufu and finding common ground in that mission and the shared vow of our mentor. We are of one mind in our dedication to kosen-rufu.

The Daishonin also warns us that, “if any of Nichiren’s disciples disrupt the unity of many in body but one in mind, they would be like warriors who destroy their own castle from within” (WND-1, 217).

When we take on the responsibilities of an organizational posi-

tion, we pledge to care for others within this amazing and precious community of believers in the SGI-USA. Leadership is a position of responsibility, not of authority. But we have to acknowledge the challenge in accomplishing Buddhist unity. In “Letter to Misawa,” Nichiren explains that “Although people study Buddhism, it is difficult for them to practice it correctly either because of the ignorance of their minds, or because, even though wise, they fail to realize that they are being misled by their teachers” (WND-1, 894). Leaders serve to strengthen rather than weaken our bonds to Nichiren’s teachings and the Buddhist Order.

### “My Young Friends, This is Your Time.”

We stand at the threshold of an entirely new stage of development. We can make sense of history when we understand how it affects us today—when we understand that the past is part of our present lives. More than ever, we must return to a thorough study of the basics of Nichiren Buddhism and deepen our understanding of what it means to practice Nichiren’s teaching today. Knowing our past, helps us realize the importance of taking such action.

For the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai, SGI President Ikeda wrote an essay titled “My Vow for the 80th Anniversary,” which reads in part:

“The lives of all of you who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and exert yourselves for kosen-rufu are infinitely noble and respectable. You have as yet tapped only a fraction of the boundless power of Buddhahood you possess, and revealed only a tiny fraction of your limitless Buddha wisdom...

“...At the end of this milestone year marking 50 years since I became president, I am determined to proudly announce to Mr. Toda: ‘Our youthful successors have magnificently adorned the Soka Gakkai’s 80th anniversary with total victory! The future of kosen-rufu is secure!’...

“Each of you must become strong and empowered. This will enable you to win in life. It is not up to others. It is up to you. With this in mind, I wholeheartedly pray and call on all of you to accomplish your own great human revolution in the coming year...

“My young friends, this is your time.”

(March 26, 2010, *World Tribune*, pp. 4–5)



## Glossary

**Devil king of the sixth heaven.** The king of devils who, in Buddhist mythology, dwells in the highest or the sixth heaven of the world of desire. He is also named Freely Enjoying Things Conjured by Others, the king who makes free use of the fruits of others' efforts for his own pleasure. Served by innumerable minions, he obstructs Buddhist practice and delights in sapping the life-force of other beings. The devil king is a personification of the negative tendency to force others to one's will at any cost.

**Fundamental darkness.** Also, fundamental ignorance or primal ignorance. The most deeply rooted illusion inherent in life, said to give rise to all other illusions. Darkness in this sense means inability to see or recognize the truth, particularly, the true nature of one's life. The term fundamental darkness is contrasted with the fundamental nature of enlightenment, which is the Buddha nature inherent in life or enlightenment to the fundamental nature of all things and phenomena.

**Kosen-rufu.** Wide propagation, or wide proclamation and propagation. A term from the Lotus Sutra that literally means to declare and spread widely. Nichiren (1222–1282), identifying himself as the votary of the Lotus Sutra, made it his lifelong mission to fulfill the above injunction of the Buddha, that is, kosen-rufu. He saw widely propagating his teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which he identified as the essence of the sutra, as the fulfillment of that mission.

**Lotus Sutra.** One of the Mahayana sutras. China's T'ien-t'ai (538–597), in *The Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra*, formulated a system of classification of the entire body of Buddhist sutras called the "five periods and eight teachings," which ranks the Lotus Sutra above all the other sutras. In Japan, Nichiren (1222–1282) also upheld the Lotus Sutra, which describes all living beings as potential Buddhas, and identified its essence as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

**Nichiren Shoshu.** Literally, "Nichiren Correct school." One of the Nichiren schools, whose head temple is Taiseki-ji in Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan. This school regards Nichiren as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law and recognizes his teaching of "sowing" implicit in the "Life Span" (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. In 1930 the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value-Creating Education Society) was inaugurated by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944) and Josei Toda (1900–1958), who had converted to Nichiren Shoshu. From the early 1930s through the Second World War, imperial Japan tried to unify the people with State Shinto as the spiritual backbone of wars it fought and the Peace Preservation Law of 1925 as the means for thought control. Under this system, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood complied with the militarist government's command of Shinto worship, which Makiguchi refused despite the urging of the priesthood. As a result, charged with violation of the Peace Preservation Law and with lèse-majesté against the emperor and his ancestral god, twenty-one top



leaders of the society were arrested and imprisoned. Most of them abandoned their faith and renounced their association with Makiguchi and Toda. Makiguchi upheld his faith and died in prison in 1944. His disciple, Toda, was finally released on parole just before the end of the war and then embarked on the reconstruction of their lay movement, which he renamed Soka Gakkai (Value-Creating Society), and of Nichiren Shoshu, which had been left destitute. In the ensuing years, the Soka Gakkai grew into a substantial worldwide movement with a membership of several million. The priesthood of Nichiren Shoshu, however, found itself ill-prepared to deal with an active and socially engaged membership body of this scale. Its 67th chief priest, Nikken, sought to disband the organization and bring its membership directly under his control. The Soka Gakkai resisted this plan and was excommunicated in 1991 by Nikken. Contrary to Nikken's plans, however, the Soka Gakkai continued to grow and flourish after the excommunication. Nichiren Shoshu maintained a posture of appealing to Soka Gakkai members to leave the organization and directly believe in and support the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. To do so, they promulgated a doctrine ascribing to their chief priest certain unique and special powers and implied that he alone was the living equivalent of Nichiren. The Soka Gakkai held that this doctrine had nothing to do with the teachings of Nichiren, the spiritual founder of both groups, and thus constituted a misrepresentation of his teachings.

**Mara.** The personification of evil. In Buddhist scriptures, Mara is the name of a devil king who rules over numerous devils who are his retinue. Mara is identified with the devil king of the sixth heaven. In Buddhism, devils indicate those functions that block or hinder people's effort to complete their Buddhist practice.

**Three obstacles and four devils.** Various obstacles and hindrances to the practice of Buddhism. They are listed in the Nirvana Sutra and The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom. The three obstacles are (1) the obstacle of earthly desires, or obstacles arising from the three poisons of greed, anger, and foolishness; (2) the obstacle of karma, obstacles due to bad karma created by committing any of the five cardinal sins or ten evil acts; and (3) the obstacle of retribution, obstacles caused by the negative karmic effects of actions in the three evil paths. In a letter addressed to the Ikegami brothers in 1275, Nichiren states, "The obstacle of earthly desires is the impediments to one's practice that arise from greed, anger, foolishness, and the like; the obstacle of karma is the hindrances presented by one's wife or children; and the obstacle of retribution is the hindrances caused by one's sovereign or parents." The four devils are (1) the hindrance of the five components, obstructions caused by one's physical and mental functions; (2) the hindrance of earthly desires, obstructions arising from the three poisons; (3) the hindrance of death, meaning one's own untimely death obstructing one's practice of Buddhism, or the premature death of another practitioner causing one to doubt; and (4) the hindrance of the devil king, who is said to assume various forms or take possession of others in order to cause one to discard one's Buddhist practice. This hindrance is regarded as the most difficult to overcome.



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