

Know the Difference: The Underlying Intent
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When the dispute between the SGI and the Nikken sect first broke in late 1990–early 1991, to some it seemed focused on charges of disrespect. There was a flurry of correspondence back and forth regarding desired apologies and clarifications (the priests asking for apologies, the SGI asking for clarifications).

For many members in America, the dispute began to hit home only when the Nikken sect's interpretation changed regarding the fundamental philosophy of the practice, as we explained last time (March 7 *World Tribune*). Most people begin to practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with this one, elementary — and very correct — understanding: Any person, regardless of race, color or sex, can bring forth his or her inherent Buddha nature by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

But why, when the split occurred, did the Nikken sect begin to take a different track? Suddenly, the priests were saying that, even though all people were equal, the high priest had a higher wisdom than we could ever attain. The Nikken sect explained that since we had not been a part of the lineage of high priests, we could not bring forth the same Buddha nature that Shakyamuni or Nichiren Daishonin did. It was like something the priests had “forgotten” to tell us.

The priests' underlying prejudice against lay believers, which manifested in 1991 but had existed for many years prior, can explain all of the priesthood's actions up to that point and since then.

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