

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TEMPLE ISSUE

### Why Is It Important To Know About the Temple Issue?

#### **Q: Why is it important to know about the temple issue?**

A: The temple issue speaks to the essence of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. To understand the issue challenges each of us to realize that taking full responsibility for our own happiness is the path of correct faith and practice.

Simply put, the temple issue provides a real-world, modern-day opportunity to witness the principles that Nichiren Daishonin spoke about 700 years ago. For this reason, we should avoid viewing the problem as something of the past or of another place, something that is not our personal concern. To do so would mean missing an irreplaceable learning opportunity. We would also do a disservice to those who join the SGI in the future: If we do not understand and transmit the profound implications of these events to future generations, then those to follow may face similar obstacles without the benefit of the example and understanding we could pass on.

In many of his writings, Nichiren Daishonin cautions how futile it is to practice Buddhism without correctly grasping the meaning of faith. If we fail to understand the fundamental principles of our faith, he says, no matter how much time we may put into it, our practice will "become an endless, painful austerity" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 4), and our Buddhist knowledge will "not relieve [us] of mortal sufferings in the least" (MW-1, 4). He goes so far as to say that without a correct understanding of faith, "it would be useless to embrace the Lotus Sutra [i.e., the Gohonzon]" (MW-1, 25).

"Correct faith" in the Daishonin's Buddhism means to view things as Nichiren Daishonin taught, share his convictions, and practice and develop our lives in accord with that understanding. Question 4 of this pamphlet lists a few examples of how the temple's view on certain matters of faith diverges significantly from that of the Daishonin.

In another Goshō, he writes:

It is a time when...truth and error stand shoulder to shoulder, and when Mahayana and Hinayana 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 Law. This is the practice of *shakubuku*. (MW-5, 103)

Erroneous views in Buddhism are often propounded by those well versed in theory yet who fail to grasp the heart or spirit of Buddhism, those who lack a compassionate practice. It is up to those who do understand the heart of Buddhism to shed light on what is true and what is erroneous.

As SGI members, we might ask ourselves whether we could clearly explain this issue to someone else, even to someone outside our organization or someone interested in practicing for the first time. If we are asked: "What is the temple issue about?" or "How can you say that the SGI is correct and Nichiren Shoshu is wrong?" can we give a convincing answer?

When we can answer these questions through our own understanding and conviction, then we have grasped something important for our faith and lives. We will also gain insight into fundamental issues affecting humanity: the nature of justice, the qualities of a true leader, equality, tolerance and the purpose of religion. The temple issue gives us an excellent opportunity to learn about the Daishonin's Buddhism, which is, after all, about our own lives and humanity.

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It is no secret that the intention of Nichiren Shoshu is to disband the SGI and destroy our movement, denying millions of believers the source of nourishment for their faith and practice and stopping the progress of kosen-rufu.

In a recent speech at the head temple, Nichiren Shoshu General Administrator Nichijun Fujimoto is reported to have said, "Now is the time to crush the Soka Gakkai." Efforts by priests and temple members in the United States to convince members to leave the SGI by creating doubts regarding the Gohonzon or spreading misinformation about the SGI are clearly increasing.

The Daishonin writes, "Simply to chant one four-phrase verse or the daimoku, and to protect those who do so, is called the essential practice" (MW-3, 9). The best way to protect ourselves and our fellow members from being misled is to arm ourselves with correct information and understanding. Our study of the temple issue will help us do this.

*Two in a series*

### Key Points:

- **The temple issue gives us an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the basics of the Daishonin's Buddhism.**
- **It causes all of us to ask, "What is the meaning of correct faith and practice?"**
- **It teaches us about our own lives, about how to deepen our faith.**
- **Understanding the issue can help us educate others, thus helping them become aware of the priesthood's designs.**

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