

**EDITORIAL: UNDERSTANDING OUR ESSENTIAL AND ETERNAL MISSION
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Greg Martin says that ‘the temple issue in America is really about learning the complete practice of shakubuku – about refuting incorrect views of Buddhism and teaching a correct view.’

In America, we have enjoyed tremendous success in sharing Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism with the American people. We are unique and remarkable when compared to other Buddhist religions in the scope, depth and diversity of the roots we now have in American soil. We are truly an American success story, according to Professor of Religion Phillip Hammond in his new book *Soka Gakkai in America*. We can be rightfully proud of that history.

Shakubuku has two aspects — teaching the true path that leads people to happiness is only half of it. The other half is refuting what is untrue, whatever leads people to suffering. In either case, compassion characterizes Nichiren Daishonin’s essential spirit and will.

The temple issue in America is really about learning the complete practice of shakubuku — about refuting incorrect views of Buddhism and teaching a correct view. Because we do not live in a Buddhist society, we have not had the opportunity to practice this kind of shakubuku.

Not only are we inexperienced at correcting erroneous Buddhist teachings, we are also, perhaps, not very comfortable doing so.

But for us to inherit the torch of kosen-rufu that SGI President Ikeda wants to pass on to us — and that we wish to accept and carry into the 21st Century — it is clear that we must have the understanding and courage to do shakubuku. In face of the attacks by the priesthood, we must have the understanding and courage to clarify the correct practice of the Daishonin’s Buddhism in contrast to the incorrect practice.

The Daishonin states, “If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 93). We are presented with a great opportunity to grasp this spirit and inherit the Daishonin’s will by the temple’s attacks upon us and their distortions of the Daishonin’s teachings.

The question we are faced with is whether we will have the awareness of the significance of the temple issue in this respect and the courage to accept this mission.

Most essential to our efforts is the power of prayer. Each of us can set our own chanting goal about the temple issue to support the 10 billion daimoku chanting campaign that the youth division is sponsoring.

This daimoku, combined with our efforts to make sure that as many people as possible understand the reality of the temple’s misrepresentation of the Daishonin’s Buddhism — and then, being fully informed, make the wise choice to voluntarily discontinue their support of the temple — are the most direct paths to our goal. It is certain that without believers and supporters, the temples can no longer disseminate in America their false and misleading view of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

It’s important for all of us to understand that victory over the negative influence of the temple is actually a measure or an effect of our compassion and courage to do shakubuku — the courage to engage and correct mistaken views about this faith and the kosen-rufu

movement, whether among our membership or temple members.

Our actions and dialogue toward this shakubuku in no way contradict the spirit of religious tolerance — which all too often manifests simply as indifference — nor do they run counter to the spirit of religious freedom. At appropriate times, we can discuss our differences with any Buddhist sect — that we believe in Shakyamuni's, T'ien-t'ai's and Nichiren Daishonin's admonition to follow only the Lotus Sutra. And that the correct practice for the Latter Day of the Law is the Buddhism of the Daishonin.

But no other Buddhist sect has deliberately set out to destroy the SGI. From before Operation C to the two excommunications, from the counterfeit Gohonzon charges to the destruction of the Grand Main Temple, no other sect has tried to destroy our organization, undermine our members' faith and defeat the kosen-rufu movement as Nichiren Shoshu has. This is where the difference between religious tolerance and indifference should be clear.

In the final analysis, our efforts to define the correct practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism in contrast to what the priesthood teaches is an act of compassion — saving people who have been led down a path of unhappiness and sorrow — and an exercise of our rights to freedom of religious expression.

As President Ikeda recently said: "Overlooking differences or putting them aside may seem compassionate, but really, it is only a lack of anger at evil — a moral weakness. Soft-pedaling moral questions is the beginning of moral collapse" (March 19 *World Tribune*, p. 11).

President Ikeda has been leading a revolutionary effort — to replace a mistaken ideology that leads to subservience and misery with the life-affirming, correct teaching of the Daishonin. And we must realize this in America, too.

Our aim is to reach out and enable all of our members, both active and inactive, and as many temple members as possible, to fully realize the correct teaching.

The meaning and significance of the temple issue for us, then, is found in accepting our identity and mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth here on American soil. To inherit the Daishonin's spirit lies in carrying out shakubuku. It is our mission to rise to this challenge!

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