

**NO DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN**  
**MIKE EVERS**  
**MEBANE, NO. CAROLINA**

As the husband of a woman whose faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is strong, and the father of two young women and two young men, all of whom practice, I recognize the values of equality and diversity. Each one of us brings unique characteristics to the struggle for kosen-rufu. I especially appreciate the fact that the women of our family take the lead on numerous occasions to encourage, nurture and promote others; to include their family members—and to grow in their faith and practice of Buddhism. They are fully capable of leading—and often more willing than we men.

In July, a priest from the Nikken sect, accompanied by three acolytes, attended a temple-members' discussion meeting. A woman asked the priest whether or not women could become priests in the Nikken Sect. Claiming to use Nichiren Daishonin's writings as his reference, the priest stated: "There is a passage in the Gosho that says a woman is supposed to live like a woman. And basically what it means to live like a woman is to be a mother and take care of children." With this answer, the woman who asked the question looked very perplexed, and said, "I don't know if I can accept that," and left the scene.

While the Daishonin praised women for their roles as wives and mothers, he also praised them for their dedication, leadership and courageous efforts in society. He stated on numerous occasions that there are no distinctions between men and women when it comes to our practice of faith.

That the priest did not convey the correct teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, that is, the spirit that the four kinds of believers are all equal—priests (or monks), nuns, laymen and laywomen—is indeed shameful. This concept, that priests and nuns are equal and, in fact, all men and women are equal, is stated clearly by the Daishonin: "The Yujutsu chapter [15th chapter of the Lotus Sutra] states, 'I have taught these people since the remotest past.' There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women. Were they not Bodhisattvas of the Earth, they could not chant the daimoku" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 93).

Nichiren Daishonin rejected previous teachings that espoused distinctions between men and women. He declared that Ama Gozen, mother of Oto Gozen, would, without a doubt, become a Buddha. "Since you revere the Lotus Sutra, you are a woman who is certain to become a Buddha" (January *Living Buddhism*, p. 10). Not only did this woman have strong, sincere faith, she took the actions of a compassionate leader who cared for those who were struggling to maintain faith. "I understand that you are looking after the disciples [in Kamakura]. I cannot thank you enough" (Ibid., p. 11). Ama Gozen is one example of many women believers who were praised by Nichiren Daishonin.

He recognized her as a leader of kosen-rufu for taking care of disciples and braving the dangerous trek across Japan to visit him while on Sado. He did not, as the Nikken priests did, relegate her to a stereotypical role.

President Ikeda praises women for their dedication and diligence: "...Women are sharp observers. They possess great strength.

If we pay attention to what women have to say, our families and our societies will flourish.... Nichiren Daishonin, to an astonishing degree, valued and praised his female followers, who dedicated themselves to their Buddhist practice with utmost sincerity. Respect

for women is the spirit of the Daishonin's Buddhism" (Aug. 6 *World Tribune*, p. 1).

How wonderful it is to be a part of this great organization, SGI that does not promote distinctions based upon race, gender or ethnicity. As a member of the men's division, I am not demeaned by the efforts of the women of the SGI. Rather, I am uplifted and encouraged by their actions. I am proud to be a member of SGI working side by side with so many capable people, both men and women, who, without the robes of authority, humbly continue to "take care of the disciples." And, I am proud to have, as our leader, Daisaku Ikeda, who teaches us to respect, recognize and honor all human beings rather than make discriminatory distinctions.

I appreciate the women of SGI who uphold the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and encourage others to practice faithfully. It was a woman who gave me birth so that I could be introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

It was also a woman who gave me birth into faith by introducing me to this practice and who taught me to practice correctly. To both I owe a great debt of gratitude. Neither of these women wore the robes of a priest, but instead wore the bright joyful "robes" of faith, love, courage, hope and compassion.

**WT**

Title: No Discrimination Between Men And Women

Subject: World Tribune 09/10/99 n.3259 p.10 WT990910p10

Author: Mike Evers

Keywords: Between Discrimination Diversity Evers Mike Perspective Tolerance Tribune Women World