

**SOKA SPIRIT: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**  
**WHY HAS THE SGI FOCUSED ON THE HIGH PRIEST SO MUCH?**  
**BY JEFF FARR, ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

When Nikken, current Nichiren Shoshu high priest, excommunicated the SGI in 1991, one choice our organization could have made would have been to walk away from the whole mess, ignoring all the terrible things that he was doing. We could have devoted all our energies to developing our own movement, to making the best SGI possible.

Why, then, have we kept talking about Nikken? Why has the SGI kept such a strong spotlight focused on him—on pointing out his bad points—for all these years?

Nichiren Shoshu, under Nikken's leadership, is negating Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism by spreading a twisted version of it throughout the world. The Nikken sect's religion is not the Daishonin's religion at all—but Nikken is still pretending that it is. He is the one in charge of this spiritual con game, thus playing the role of the devil king of the sixth heaven, who entices people away from correct Buddhist practice.

The SGI's Soka Spirit efforts have been, in the face of Nikken's efforts to confuse, all about clarifying the Daishonin's Buddhism—what exactly this Buddhism is and is *not*. An important component of this has been letting people know that Nikken's lead has taken Nichiren Shoshu far, far off-track.

True Buddhist leaders lead through their behavior. The Daishonin teaches that the real meaning of Buddhist practice lies in one's "behavior as a human being" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 852). He set the example for us by acting as sovereign, teacher and parent to the people, just as Buddhism teaches that leaders should. In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni expresses the three virtues this way: "Now this threefold world / is all my domain, [corresponds to sovereign] / and the living beings in it / are all my children. [parent] / Now this place / is beset by many pains and trials. / I am the only person / who can rescue and protect others. [teacher]" (*The Lotus Sutra*, pp. 69–70).

Do we see these virtues in Nikken's actions? First, Nikken has not been the kind of sovereign Shakyamuni is talking about—the kind who thinks of all humanity, whose determination is to save every person in the world from suffering. Instead of embracing all of us, Nikken has tried to destroy our unity and turn us on one another. In 1991, he ordered the Soka Gakkai to disband and excommunicated 12 million lay believers; he split the body of practitioners in two.

He refused to confer the Gohonzon upon SGI members any longer and stopped allowing us to visit the head temple to worship the Dai-Gohonzon, the Gohonzon inscribed by the Daishonin for all humanity. Only if we promised to join the temple organization, which entailed turning our backs on our SGI family, would he grant us access.

Second, the Lotus Sutra says that a true teacher directs people to enlightenment by instilling in them the correct teachings, giving them the tools to win their own happiness. It is in this area that we see perhaps the worst thing about Nikken: the way he has discarded the Daishonin's teachings. He has tried to fool people into taking his new ones—which revolve around deference to him as a godlike intermediary between us and the Gohonzon—as the real deal on the Daishonin's Buddhism. When he had the chance to teach, Nikken chose to miseducate.

In the Daishonin's conception, the high priest's role was simply to teach this Buddhism the right way, with his or her whole life, turning over all of Buddhism's wisdom to the people. The high priest's role was never meant to be some kind of barrier to the Law.

Third, Nikken has failed to show us the immense parental compassion—as if we were all his own children—that a Buddhist leader must. In its place, what we’ve seen has been his contempt. Wasn’t this one of the motivations that led him to destroy all the believers’ donations of facilities to the head temple? The Grand Main Temple, for example, was the crystallization of 8 million members’ sincere offerings of more than \$360 million (which would be triple that today, somewhere around a billion dollars). The razing of this edifice of peace was meant as a big slap in the face to each one of these 8 million people.

In 1990, Nikken revealed his true feeling to an anti-Soka Gakkai journalist that “I’ll be satisfied if 200,000 Gakkai members out of 2 million side with us.” What father could abandon his children so callously?

In “The Opening of the Eyes,” the Daishonin states, “I, Nichiren, am sovereign, teacher, and father and mother to all the people of Japan” (WND, 287). Nikken could never honestly make such a statement, for he is no sovereign, no teacher and no parent. He is not “the Daishonin of modern times,” which is what he lets his followers call him.

So, do we pay no attention to someone who does the things that Nikken has done and just proceed toward kosen-rufu? Or is facing this kind of person—denying his or her slander outright—the quickest, surest way of achieving our dreams for kosen-rufu?

The Daishonin devoted his life to refuting slander. Using the examples of the many Buddhist sects then popular, highlighting how they advocated provisional teachings, he set up a distinction: how his Buddhism was different, how his Buddhism was true. His going head to head with priests like the revered Ryokan was not done out of spite—it was in hopes that such engagement would lead to the immortalization of this Buddhism, to the spread of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and to the people’s happiness far into the future.

All the Daishonin’s efforts, all his writings, are our greatest education. And the SGI’s Soka Spirit movement, based entirely on these, is the same education for a new era.

Then again, it’s the same era. We’re still here in the Latter Day of the Law. The Law is still being slandered. The king devil of the sixth heaven is here with us. The grand history of delineating what is and is not the Daishonin’s Buddhism is not over yet.

When we join the Soka Spirit cause, we become part of this history. Our lives become part of the enormous victory of the Law that will surely unfold. As the Daishonin 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 correct teaching. This is the practice of shakubuku” (WND, 126).

It’s clear, then, what the Daishonin thought we should do when someone set on slandering the Law appears before us: *something*. We must say something, we must do something, and we must prove the truth.

*Last in a series*