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High Priest Nittatsu says that 'anyone who, with or without basis, should slander the great and harmonious body of practitioners that has contributed to and protected our school with such unparalleled noble sincerity is guilty of holding an erroneous view.'

High Priest Nittatsu's directive in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper, continued to cite the Soka Gakkai's accomplishments: "The Soka Gakkai has operated on the noblest of ideals and done away with the evils of the past, taking action in exact accord with Nichiren Daishonin's sacred teaching of the application of Buddhist principles to the betterment of society. With great compassion as its foundation, it has initiated a broad range of activities to promote the well-being of all people.

"Basing its endeavors on the correct Buddhist teaching, the Soka Gakkai has spoken out for truth, profoundly influencing not only practitioners and non-practitioners alike, but also moving widely into the realms of academia and culture while advancing steadily toward kosen-rufu. In all of its efforts, it has pressed forward unceasingly one step at a time and exhibited tremendous strength.

"Through everything, the Soka Gakkai has maintained a solid seeking spirit, never wavering or compromising its ideals. It deserves our deepest respect.

"It is time for the priests of Nichiren Shoshu to devote themselves to their Buddhist practice and to fulfill their duties. It goes without saying that to be a priest means to have firm and unshakable faith, to exert oneself in practice and study, and to offer sincere gratitude to the Buddha. It is to serve as a model for others through our actions, behavior, study and understanding of Buddhism.

"Instead, there are rumors of those who lack an appreciation of the significance of the incredible circumstances we are now in and who betray the nature and role of the priesthood through their words and actions. This is truly deplorable. If these rumors are indeed true, we face a very grave situation.

"If the disciples of the Buddha who wear the three garments [the robe, the surplice and the prayer beads] and whose purpose it is to dedicate themselves selflessly to Buddhist practice and propagate its teachings are guilty of such lapses, they are like warriors who destroy their own castle from within (see *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 21). As a matter of course, such priests must be ousted and punished.

"Let us not be reprimanded as priests who 'spend their time in idleness and chatter' (see WND, 760), are 'idle and negligent' (WND, 303), are no better 'than animals dressed in priestly robes' and are 'disciples of non-Buddhist teachings' (see WND, 760). Rather, let us be discreet in our behavior, living by the principle of desiring little yet knowing satisfaction, and, with the ferocity of a mighty lion, rise to action and devote ourselves wholeheartedly to our Buddhist practice.

"I hope that all Nichiren Shoshu priests will understand my intent and will implement the instructions of our predecessor to unite with the laity and realize the principle of many in body, one in mind, striving to the fullest extent to accomplish our great desire."

The end of the document read, "The above directive was made by Hosoi Nittatsu, Chief Administrator of Nichiren Shoshu, on July 15, 1963." Such an official reprimand of the priests' behavior was an extraordinary event.

The high priest's directive to the Hokkeko members was also very severe. The Hokkeko was an association of parishioners belonging to various local Nichiren Shoshu temples. This directive started out by attributing the present surge of advancement toward worldwide kosen-rufu to the appearance of the Soka Gakkai. It praised the organization as acting in accord with the Daishonin's great vision of widespread propagation and hailed the efforts of its members to unite as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and introduce many others to the practice.

The document further stated: "The selfless dedication of Soka Gakkai members to propagating the Law is an absolutely unprecedented occurrence in the history of our school.

"Under the leadership of the Soka Gakkai president, the Soka Gakkai's more than 3.4 million member households have worked in complete unison and initiated a variety of indispensable activities aimed at spreading the Daishonin's teachings across the globe. These efforts are producing remarkable results.

"The Daishonin is surely applauding their actions, which should also be shown the utmost respect from both priests and laity alike. Let it be known that anyone who, with or without basis, should slander the great and harmonious body of practitioners that has contributed to and protected our school with such unparalleled noble sincerity is guilty of holding an erroneous view that obstructs the pure practice of kosen-rufu, and will be bound for the hell of incessant suffering."

The directive concluded: "Let the genuine seeking spirit of the Soka Gakkai members be appreciated, looked to and revered as a true model of Buddhist practice. I hope that all Hokkeko members will work together with their counterparts in the Soka Gakkai in our endeavor to create a Buddha land, and that they will continue to advance side-by-side with them."

When the members of the Soka Gakkai, who for the most part had little contact with either priests or Hokkeko members, read these directives, they realized for the first time that some within those groups must have been slandering and criticizing the Soka Gakkai, and they could not conceal their astonishment. On the other hand, those who did have contact with the priests and Hokkeko members were not in the least surprised. They had frequently heard members of both groups speak ill of the Soka Gakkai and President Shin'ichi Yamamoto, and seen with their own eyes corrupt and degenerate behavior among the priests. This had concerned them deeply. Reading the directives, however, brought them comfort, as they felt that the Nichiren Shoshu administration now understood the real nature of the situation with its priests and was at last taking appropriate measures. They had hope that this would awaken the priests and Hokkeko members to the true meaning of faith.

At any rate, High Priest Nittatsu's directives reassured the Soka Gakkai members that he correctly understood the organization, and inspired them to work even harder.

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the
novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto.
The events take place in 1963.