

**THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION**  
**‘JEWELLED SWORD’**  
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*‘A close look at the history of Nichiren Shoshu reveals that, aside from Nichikan and a small number of priests who remained faithful to Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings, over the centuries the heritage and lifeblood of faith had been lost time and again. The Daishonin’s spirit had long been missing from within the priesthood.’*

In October 1931, the Minobu school was moving ahead with its plan to have the emperor inscribe on a plaque Nichiren Daishonin’s new title, Great Teacher Rissho, to be kept at Kuonji, the head temple of the Minobu school.

By being the recipient of the emperor’s handwritten inscription of the Daishonin’s new title, the Minobu school hoped to make itself appear to be the most important of all the Nichiren denominations. Before approving the Minobu school’s application, however, the Japanese Ministry of Education required the agreement of the heads of all other Nichiren schools. The senior priests of Minobu therefore went to the heads of each school asking them to sign a memorandum giving their consent. This included Nichiren Shoshu, whose high priest at the time was Nichikai Abe [father of the current high priest, Nikken].

The memorandum stated in effect that since the Daishonin’s tomb was located at Kuonji temple on Mt. Minobu, the undersigned supported the petition submitted by the temple’s chief priest requesting that the plaque bearing the emperor’s inscription be kept there. In other words, by signing the agreement, one assented to the claim that the tomb containing the Daishonin’s remains — his grave — was located on Minobu. Yet Nichikai Abe signed and officially sealed the document as the chief administrator of Nichiren Shoshu.

The second high priest, Nikko Shonin, left Minobu because Mimbu Niko, the chief instructor of priests at Kuonji temple, permitted the local steward of Minobu, Hakiri Sanenaga, to build a statue of Shakyamuni Buddha and make pilgrimages to Shinto shrines. These were violations of the Daishonin’s teachings, and Minobu thus became a place of slander of the Law and a nest of devilish influences. Nikko Shonin could not allow such a place to be the residence of the Daishonin’s remains, and so, heartbroken, he took them and left the mountain.

At the time, he wrote, “My pain and chagrin at leaving Minobu valley is beyond description” (*Hennentai Goshō*, p. 1733). There is no knowing the depths of his sadness. When high priest Nichikai Abe signed, sealed and assented to the memorandum stating that Minobu was the location of the Daishonin’s tomb, he completely defied Nikko Shonin. More than that, he trampled on and betrayed the Daishonin’s spirit and the correct teachings and doctrines.

It was the Soka Gakkai that finally removed this stain from Nichiren Shoshu’s history. On March 11, 1955, a debate took place between the Soka Gakkai and the Minobu school in Otaru, Hokkaido. In proving that neither the Dai-Gohonzon nor the Daishonin’s remains were located on Minobu and completely refuting the errors of the Minobu school, the Soka Gakkai side gained an enormous victory.

The moderator for the Soka Gakkai was Shin’ichi Yamamoto, the youth division chief of staff. From the get-go, Shin’ichi pointed out the fact that countless followers of the Minobu school were joining the Soka Gakkai, and he sharply illuminated the opponent’s

erroneous doctrines. This opened the way to the Soka Gakkai's victory, and the correct teachings of Nikko Shonin were protected.

During World War II, when the military government drew up a plan of uniting all Nichiren schools under its policy of thought control, there were some priests of Nichiren Shoshu who consented. But Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai's first president, emphasized that in order to protect the correct teachings and doctrines of the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin, Nichiren Shoshu should apply to the government for independent status. Finally, in March 1941, through President Makiguchi's tireless efforts, Nichiren Shoshu was granted status as an independent religious body.

In September 1941, two years before the arrest of President Makiguchi and his disciple, Josei Toda, the Nichiren Shoshu administration had 14 important passages excised from the Gosho, including "I, Nichiren, am the foremost sage in all Jambudvipa..." (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 642). They were afraid of being charged with lèse majesté by the military government, which had made State Shinto its spiritual foundation.

This act of deleting passages that were, in essence, the Daishonin's great declaration of his true identity, was on a level equal to the actions of the five senior priests at the time of Nikko Shonin. Thinking that the Daishonin's writings in the easily readable kana syllabary, which he had scribed for the sake of the lay followers he was addressing, were a disgrace to his name, these priests destroyed them, reprocessed the paper on which they had been written or burned them.

Finally, the head temple enshrined the Shinto talisman and ordered Soka Gakkai members to do the same. But the Soka Gakkai stoutly refused to do so, and as a result presidents Makiguchi and Toda were arrested and imprisoned. Fearing being linked with the two Soka Gakkai leaders, the priesthood expelled them from its followers and prohibited Soka Gakkai members from visiting the head temple.

Though the priests proclaimed that Nichiren Shoshu preserved "the direct heritage of the Law from one high priest to the next" and that it was as perfect as if the "water of the pure Mystic Law had been transferred from one vessel to another without a drop being spilled," they completely discarded the Soka Gakkai, which was fighting in the genuine spirit of the Daishonin. This astonishing act revealed the school's true nature.

There is deep significance in the priesthood's slanderous acts and cold treatment of the Soka Gakkai. According to the Daishonin's writings, those who devote themselves to spreading the true teaching in this defiled age of the Latter Day of the Law are certain to face persecution. That is why kosen-rufu is a sacred undertaking that can only be achieved by those who are determined to work selflessly. Nikko Shonin therefore says, "Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability without begrudging your life" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618). However, many of the priests of Nichiren Shoshu have demonstrated not the faintest shadow of that spirit. Caring only for themselves, they have hidden away from persecution and, guided solely by narrow self-interest, sought to live in the lap of luxury.

Those who make self-interest their guiding principle will naturally forget the lofty goal of realizing peace and happiness for all people and instead curry favor with the authorities.

These professional priests, who cared only about protecting themselves, ended up repeatedly distorting and seriously disgracing the Daishonin's teachings. Having grown completely accustomed to keeping up the appearance of authority and passing themselves

off as guardians of the correct teaching and doctrine, they showed not the slightest remorse or regret for their slanderous actions. Their lives were based not on the Buddhist Law but on their own interests.

When one abandons the lofty goal of kosen-rufu and seeks only to protect oneself, one loses the foundation of one's life and becomes a slave to desires. The priests' betrayal of Buddhism and their debauched way of life were two sides of the same coin. They had reduced themselves to the level of what the Daishonin described as "animals dressed in priestly robes" (see WND, 760).

A close look at the history of Nichiren Shoshu reveals that, aside from Nichikan and a small number of priests who remained faithful to the Daishonin's teachings, over the centuries the heritage and lifeblood of faith had been lost time and again. The Daishonin's spirit had long been missing from within the priesthood.

In sharp contrast, even in prison, both presidents Makiguchi and Toda continued to uphold their belief in the Daishonin's teaching. And President Makiguchi gave his very life for it. In this way, the true light of Buddhism, the spirit of the Daishonin, had been protected by the Soka Gakkai, which carried on the heritage of faith. The Soka Gakkai had prevented the Daishonin's Buddhism from being extinguished.

When President Makiguchi stood up to take the lead in realizing kosen-rufu, priests who were not inclined to work for that noble endeavor attacked him viciously. What's more, when Soka Gakkai members introduced this Buddhism to suffering people and brought them to a temple to receive the Gohonzon, most temples refused. With their cold, heartless attitude, these priests seemed to be ridiculing the great compassion with which the Daishonin strove to rescue all people from suffering. At the time, there were only two temples that would confer the Gohonzon on Soka Gakkai members. In contrast, the priests gave special consideration to believers with wealth and high social status.

Though the Daishonin had declared, "This is the correct Law in which every single person from the ruler down to the common people should take faith" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1301), most Nichiren Shoshu priests never treated the people with compassion nor did they make any effort to share the Daishonin's teachings with them. Because most ordinary citizens at the time were suffering from sickness and poverty, the priests regarded them as an unprofitable bother.

They also feared the attacks and persecution that attempts to spread the teachings might stir up. How much trouble and concern these priests must have caused President Makiguchi! It was in fact the priesthood itself that posed the greatest obstacle to the religious revolution he envisioned.

President Makiguchi once said, "The Tendai school of Buddhism at the time of the Daishonin corresponds most with Nichiren Shoshu of all the Nichiren Buddhism schools today."

The Tendai school during the Daishonin's day showed signs of corruption and degeneracy. The Great Teacher Dengyo founded the Tendai school of Buddhism based on the Lotus Sutra and the teachings of T'ien-t'ai of China, and endeavored to establish the first Mahayana Ordination Platform in Japan on Mt. Hiei. [Until that time, even Mahayana priests in Japan were ordained only in the Hinayana precepts. Dengyo struggled against opposition by the established Buddhist schools to gain the necessary approval from the emperor to establish a Mahayana ordination center, a goal that was finally realized soon after his death.]

However, his disciples, who should have inherited and transmitted his teachings faithfully, incorporated erroneous esoteric teachings into Tendai Buddhism and lost Dengyo's original intent and true spirit.

President Makiguchi continued: "We must ask ourselves who among the followers of Nichiren Shoshu through the ages 'has actually encountered the three obstacles and four devils' (WND, 501)? Isn't one who claims to lead others on the correct path without summoning forth such obstacles no more than 'a warden of hell who drives others toward the evil paths' (see WND, 501)?"

The "followers of Nichiren Shoshu" in this passage refers not to mere practitioners of the Daishonin's teachings but to the priests whose responsibility it is to "lead others." In his writings, the Daishonin clearly states that if the three obstacles and four devils do not arise, it is because the struggle for kosen-rufu has been abandoned. President Makiguchi sharply points out the cowardice and evil of such priests' choice of self-interest over kosen-rufu.

His disciple, President Toda, also continuously fought against the corruption of the priesthood, stating the following: "A priest who doesn't propagate the Daishonin's teachings himself and then complains about those who actually do is worthless. A priest who has done nothing to deserve respect but hides behind the Daishonin's greatness and demands respect is cunning. A priest who only cares about donations is a beggar.

"There are priests who say, 'We're not going to hand out the Gohonzon to just anyone.' That's outrageous. If they won't grant us the Gohonzon even though we have built them temples, then we have not built temples at all, only dormitories for priests.

"We must protect the Nichiren Shoshu organization at all costs, respecting the good priests, remonstrating with corrupt priests and refuting them, preserving the school from external enemies, and aiming for the unity of priests and laity.

"We mustn't allow the chief priests of local temples to become arrogant.... They have an unfortunate tendency to treat believers as if they were retainers or servants.

"There are priests who are incapable and irresponsible and who cozy up to powerful followers to try to solidify their position. Practitioners influenced by such priests always end up discarding their faith and coming to a sorry end."

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