

**BUDDHIST CONCEPT: Shakubuku**  
**Breaking and Subduing**  
By **ELIZABETH PAGE, Seattle Correspondent**

*Shakubuku*. It's a funny-sounding word that means introducing someone to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Early on in my practice, I was told it literally means to break and subdue someone's attachments to misleading teachings or philosophies. That was a clear explanation. It worked for me then...or did it? Does introducing people to Buddhism always mean breaking and subduing their beliefs?

There has been some confusion in our organization between the terms *shakubuku* and *shoju*, which means to introduce someone to Buddhism gradually without refuting his or her attachments to erroneous teachings — no breaking or subduing needed. At first, *shoju* sounds more like what we do in America. After all, most Americans are not necessarily slandering Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. It might seem that we are often misusing the term *shakubuku* right off the proverbial bat.

Actually, though, it's not an either/or situation. *Shakubuku* has a broader meaning than breaking or subduing people's attachments: to speak the truth about Buddhism. And *shoju* is a form of *shakubuku*. Nichiren Daishonin clearly says, "In the Latter Day of the Law...both *shoju* and *shakubuku* are to be used" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], pp. 183–84). In other words, sometimes we need to speak forcefully, sometimes soothingly and sometimes both. It depends on the person, on the situation.

SGI President Ikeda explains in an upcoming installment of "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra" (serialized in *Living Buddhism*):

First, as the major premise, all efforts to teach people about Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the Latter Day constitute *shakubuku*. Basing ourselves on the spirit of *shakubuku* to teach others about the Mystic Law without selfish concern, at times we might strictly refute a person's mistaken views, while at other times we might explain the truth with a broad-minded spirit of tolerance for the other person's beliefs.

Even if we feel we need to "strictly refute a person's mistaken views," though, we should be polite. In February 1990 in America, President Ikeda explained that propagation should always be conducted with respect for other people; we should never forget that they have the potential to become Buddhas, too.

Many SGI-USA districts have clear goals for new members to join, like two or three new members for this year. Without a target or goal, of course, it's easy to become complacent and lose the spirit of *shakubuku* that President Ikeda has been emphasizing. And considering the tremendous amount of effort it takes to help even one person practice correctly, these district goals are very ambitious.

Think about how relatively easy it is to just tell someone about this practice or even bring him or her to a meeting. Granted, these both require a lot of patience and courage — but it takes quite a bit more effort, usually by several different people, to help that person develop strong, self-reliant faith and (hopefully) surpass us!

Speaking the truth about this Buddhism might seem easy, but convincing people is hard. Knowing when to say it straight and when to just listen comes from our compassion and then doing our best — it's the process of learning how to talk about Buddhism with many different kinds of people.

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