

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE TEMPLE ISSUE What's Behind Negative Coverage of the Gakkai?

Q: What is behind the temple's promotion of media reports that paint the Gakkai in a negative light?

A: English-speaking temple members have translated many libelous anti-SGI articles from Japanese publications — both from temple publications and weekly tabloid-type gossip magazines. They have posted these to the Internet or distributed them to SGI-USA members to try to create distrust and antipathy toward the SGI.

Through its ongoing efforts to protect civil rights, the Gakkai has frequently opposed the authoritarian behavior of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party or LDP (the name may be misleading as the LDP is actually a politically conservative party). The LDP is now working closely with the Japanese media to defame and discredit the organization and SGI President Ikeda. The flurry of libelous articles about the SGI — more than 500 in 1995 alone — is the work of this alliance.

Almost all of these articles or stories have appeared in publications known as “weeklies” — widely read magazines that focus on scandal and innuendo. In the area of culpability for what they report, they fall far below such publications many Americans call “tabloids.”

In addition, Japan's lax libel laws make it quite easy for them to get away with this. In the May 27, 1997, edition of the *San Francisco Examiner*, Takesato Watanabe, a professor of journalism at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan, commented on the low level of reporting found in magazines by two publishers in particular, the Bungei Shunju and the Shinchosha. These two companies have been most active in running articles that defame the SGI.

Among other things, he writes that they have recently carried articles that have:

denied that there were gas chambers at Auschwitz. Systematically downplayed the brutal Rape of Nanking at the hands of the Japanese Military during World War II. Falsely accused an innocent man of the 1994 Matsumoto sarin gas attacks.... Heaped racy slanders on Okinawa Gov. Ota, who opposes the government's stance on American military bases on the islands.

Nichiren Daishonin would have considered this abuse the SGI today faces from such quarters as a natural result of the organization's faith and growth, something completely in line with Buddhist teachings. False accusations by self-interested individuals or groups have always been part of the equation of such persecution, which the Daishonin and his disciples experienced firsthand:

I was kept at Eichi for more than twenty days. During that period seven or eight cases of arson and an endless succession of murders took place in Kamakura. Slanderers went around saying that my disciples were setting the fires. Government officials thought this might be true and made up a list of over 260 of my followers they believed should be expelled from Kamakura. Word spread that these persons were all to be exiled to remote islands and that those disciples already in prison would be beheaded. It turned out, however, that the fires were set by the Nembutsu and Ritsu believers to implicate my disciples. There were other things that happened, but they are too numerous to mention here. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 184)

As long as the SGI continues to grow and is socially involved, we can expect groundless accusations about the organization to ensue.

In “On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings,” the Daishonin warns us:

Title: What's Behind Negative Coverage of the Gakkai?
Subject: World Tribune 10/31/97 n.3163 p.7 WT971031p07
Author:
Keywords: Answers Behind Coverage Gakkai Issues Negative Nichiren Priesthood Questions Shoshu Study Temple Tribune World

From the very day you take faith in this teaching, you should be fully prepared to face the three kinds of persecutions. (MW-1, 99)

While it is not as likely that we will be persecuted as individuals, as a Buddhist group we are certain to be.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism says that it is ordinary people who have power — a message sure to incur the wrath of entrenched authority in any day and age. Criticism and attack by certain vested interests thus go with the territory. Rather than being surprised by them, we can actually take pride in them, for they offer proof that the SGI's movement is on the right track.

Ten in a series

Key Points:

- **Nikken's effort to gain followers has long been deadlocked in Japan, and he is now focusing on expanding the influence of the priesthood outside Japan. He is willing to do anything to defame SGI President Ikeda and weaken the influence of the Soka Gakkai.**
- **Besides the temple's own publications, the carriers of such libelous articles are magazines called 'weeklies,' some of which have an even lower standard of accuracy or truthfulness than American tabloids. Yet because they are widely read, they can have considerable impact.**

Title: What's Behind Negative Coverage of the Gakkai?

Subject: World Tribune 10/31/97 n.3163 p.7 WT971031p07

Author:

Keywords: Answers Behind Coverage Gakkai Issues Negative Nichiren Priesthood Questions Shoshu Study
Temple Tribune World