

TEMPLE ISSUE: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS HOW DOES THE SGI'S STANCE TOWARD NICHIREN SHOSHU ACCORD WITH OUR STATED RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE?

BY JEFF FARR, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Buddhism stands for tolerance. Our religion seeks to build bridges among all people, among people of extremely different backgrounds.

The Preamble of the SGI Charter expresses this in saying that our organization will “raise high the banner of world citizenship, the spirit of tolerance.” We will, “based on the spirit of Buddhist tolerance, respect other religions.”

If this is an important part of the SGI's mission, why is the SGI so critical of Nichiren Shoshu? Why doesn't the SGI show more tolerance toward the priesthood? Are we contradicting ourselves?

With good reason, the SGI does not tolerate the current course of Nichiren Shoshu. As SGI President Ikeda puts it: “The Nikken sect, which ignores the challenge of social involvement, has forgotten what Buddhism is. They have lost their faith and are doing their best to try to destroy Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism” (Feb. 12 *World Tribune*, p. 10).

There is something fundamentally different about Nichiren Shoshu, then, from other religions in the world: It is the one and only religious group taking action to eradicate the Daishonin's Buddhism. Nichiren Shoshu is against the Daishonin's Buddhism—but it's pretending to be the Daishonin's Buddhism! And it's spreading.

The SGI Charter's Preamble expresses our desire to work with other religions toward common goals like protecting the people, to work with other religions based on mutual respect. The Preamble never says that we want to work with religions that share no goals with us, that hold our philosophy in contempt or that are trying to bring about the end of our religion.

Buddhism seeks to embrace all people, but when people act unfairly, unjustly—when they don't respect others and try to corrupt them—Buddhism does not ignore it. The Daishonin thus spoke up against the many religions of his day that were confusing people and leading them into deep suffering. He even says, “I am fully aware that if I do not speak out [against such sects], I will be lacking in compassion” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 95). His intolerance of religious injustice was an expression of his great heart; he attacked slanderous teachings to save people from misery.

Our temple issue education campaign today should be conducted with the same kind of caring.

President Ikeda explains in his 1996 lecture at the Simon Wiesenthal Center that passive tolerance, “the indifference and apathy that is so prevalent in modern societies,” is at odds with this caring (*Addresses in the United States—June/July 1996*, p. 19). We would cut ourselves off from the heart of this religion, from the active tolerance that the Daishonin practiced, if we just let religious corruption occur right in front of us and did nothing. As President Ikeda puts it, “Active tolerance is inseparable from the courage to resolutely oppose and resist all forms of violence and injustice that threaten human dignity” (*ibid.*).

The current course of Nichiren Shoshu requires a response from us—one of active tolerance, not passive tolerance.

Seven in a series

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