

## AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA THE BEAUTIFUL SOKA SPIRIT

**‘No matter what kind of devious attacks may be directed against us, no matter what vile plots and intrigues, nothing can halt our advance for kosen-rufu,’ SGI President Ikeda writes. ‘This is the beautiful Soka Spirit shared by mentor and disciple who are bound by strong faith.’**

May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, is a day that SGI members around the world greet proudly and joyfully. The day is bright and clear, as if we have realized all our dreams, as if 10 million tiny suns shine forth with the pride of victory.

We know that Buddhism is an eternal struggle between the Buddha and devilish functions—between positive and negative forces. We know that, on one level, the history of kosen-rufu has been one of relentless struggle against those who have abandoned their faith and come to oppose the Buddha’s teachings.

As disciples of Nichiren Daishonin, we must solemnly recognize this fact, never allowing ourselves to forget it.

To those cowardly individuals who are steeped in the world of Animality: Beware the strict workings of the Buddhist law of cause and effect!



Let us turn to the Daishonin’s times. He had many disciples who received close, compassionate instruction from him, only to betray him and abandon their faith in the end. I am talking of people like Sho-bo, Noto-bo, Sammi-bo, Ota Chikamasa and Nagasaki Tokitsuna. In contemporary terms, all of them could be described as “top leaders” of the lay community.

These individuals, whose actions ultimately accorded with the function of lowly “parasites in the lion’s bowel” did not initially intend to abandon their faith and betray the Daishonin when they first embraced the Mystic Law. Why, then, did they lose their faith? Why did they turn on their mentor and repay their debt of gratitude with enmity? I want to briefly discuss this as a lesson and guide for future generations.

Let’s look at the case of Sammi-bo, one of the most accomplished disciples of the Daishonin: He was very intelligent and articulate, and had a superior understanding of the Buddhist teachings. He was comparable to a graduate of a leading university today.

But while he was studying at Mount Hiei (the center of Japan’s Tendai School of Buddhism), he was invited to give lectures on Buddhism to the nobility, which he enjoyed doing. This, however, went to his head—to the point where he bragged about it to the Daishonin, displaying the tendency to get caught up and swept away by worldly ambitions and cares. In other words, he was conceited, a show-off.

The Daishonin sternly rebuked him for his vanity, saying to the effect: “The Mystic Law is the foremost teaching in all the world. We should fear nothing, yet here you are all puffed up just because you have preached to the nobility. Do you now look down on Nichiren?” The Daishonin’s anger was due in part to the high hopes he held for his disciple.

At the time of the Tatsu-nokuchi Persecution, Sammi-bo, knowing that it might cost him his life, accompanied the Daishonin to the execution ground. And when the Daishonin was exiled to Sado Island, Sammi-bo became one of the central disciples of the Daishonin in

Kamakura.

However, the real motive behind Sammi-bo's actions was simply a desire to look good in the eyes of others. Ultimately, he forsook his faith. He did so right at the time of greatest crisis — during the Atsuhara Persecution that led to a number of the Daishonin's peasant followers laying down their lives for their faith.

Sammi-bo had been sent by the Daishonin to assist Nikko Shonin, who was engaged in remarkably successful propagation activities in the Atsuhara area. Swayed by the flattery of the opposing forces, though, Sammi-bo tumbled down a path that led to his discarding his faith. This is exactly what happened to several top Soka Gakkai leaders in more recent times.

The tragedy of Sammi-bo's fall is also a story of jealousy. With pride in himself as an intellectual, he bridled at the prospect of merely assisting Nikko Shonin, whom he looked upon as his inferior. That dissatisfaction and jealousy ate away at him, permitting devilish functions to take the advantage. Nichiko, the 59th high priest, a very learned scholar of Buddhism, reached this conclusion about Sammi-bo's downfall.

Ultimately, it is such ugly states of mind as arrogance, vanity and envy that can destroy something so noble and precious as faith. Behind all of these ugly states lies the weakness called cowardice.

The Daishonin's famous admonition "Nichiren's disciples cannot accomplish anything if they are cowardly" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 481) was, after all, written to Sammi-bo.

Lamenting the weakness of Sammi-bo and others like him, and harshly condemning their actions, the Daishonin writes that on those "who are cowardly, unreasoning, greedy, and doubting, my words have no more effect than pouring water on lacquerware or slicing through air" (WND, 998).

No matter how much one attempts to guide such "unreasoning" people, they will not understand one's true meaning. And no matter how such people may try to teach Buddhism to others, acting as if they understand it fully, they in fact do not have a true grasp of its teachings. In the above passage, the Daishonin is telling us that such cowardly foolishness is simply the flipside of fearsome arrogance.

At the crucial moment, the people of this bent are bound to completely forget and abandon their faith. They fall away from the correct path of faith because of their cowardice, foolishness, greed and doubt.

The Daishonin exhorts his followers: "Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken in your resolve even a bit, devils will take advantage" (WND, 997). Weak individuals who do not engage in a personal spiritual struggle to strengthen their faith will be corrupted, become twisted and be washed away by the angry waves of suffering. This underscores the importance of our SGI activities. And our daily efforts to realize kosen-rufu.

In another Gosho, the Daishonin condemns ex-followers who betray and attack his teachings: "Among these are some who oppose me more furiously than those who slandered from the beginning" (WND 502).

In other words, to justify their about-face to the world, they launched even fiercer attacks against the Daishonin and his followers than they had once received themselves as the Daishonin's disciples.

We see base people just like this today, as well. We have all witnessed the sad spectacle of their half-crazed assaults on the Soka Gakkai, and it is readily apparent that they are

following the formula spelled out by the Daishonin above.



After the Daishonin's death, the five senior priests betrayed their mentor in exactly the same way. The priests I am referring to are Nissho, Nichiro, Niko, Nitcho and Nichiji.

As Nikko Shonin's "On Refuting the Five Priests" and other writings clearly show, these treacherous priests called themselves Tendai shramana (Tendai seekers of the way)—in other words, disciples of Tendai, as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China is known in Japanese. This was in spite of the fact that they were supposed to be the Daishonin's loyal disciples.

Why did they do this? Because they wanted to find favor in the secular world, and they feared persecution. We can discern in them no trace of pride as disciples of the Daishonin, who had declared that the hallmark of his disciples—the proof that they were votaries of the Lotus Sutra—was their encountering great persecution (WND, 33).

Further, the five senior priests disrupted the unity that should have prevailed among the Daishonin's disciples by refusing to follow Nikko Shonin, the Daishonin's true successor, instead declaring themselves to be his "direct disciples."

Here we see another pitiful example of people consumed by self-interest, arrogance and envy—people ruled by the world of Animality—who turned against the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Being wise to this pattern, it is crucial that we keep our eyes wide open so to clearly see through the activities and schemes of treacherous individuals, always maintaining a strict attitude toward them. We must be eternally committed to remonstrating against such evil, based on the correctness of the Daishonin's Buddhism.



Looking back at Soka Gakkai history, when the military government moved to suppress the organization's activities and imprisoned our founding president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, there were members who immediately turned on him and started cursing and berating him. "That damn Makiguchi!" "It's all his fault!" "He deceived us!" they said. They blamed him for what happened, claiming that he duped them. Some of these people even went to Mr. Makiguchi's house and verbally abused his family members.

When Mr. Toda, our great mentor, was released from prison, he directly confronted these traitorous disciples. In his treatise "The History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai," he left a clear account of their panic and shallow ingratitude in the face of persecution. "The Soka Gakkai organization had disappeared without a trace," he wrote, "and everywhere I looked I saw people who doubted the Gohonzon, resented Mr. Makiguchi and hated me."

Among them was a certain Mr. Nojima, whom the Soka Gakkai's executives had unofficially decided to appoint general director in the autumn of 1943. Not only did he abandon his faith after he was imprisoned in the wave of persecution that beset the Soka Gakkai, but he heaped vile abuse on both Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda.



Even today, across the span of many decades, I am struck powerfully by Mr. Toda's passionate guidance, based on the oneness of mentor and disciple—on the Buddhist teachings.

Mr. Toda declared that those members who tried to give the impression that they were

exerting themselves diligently in their Buddhist practice—but were actually just cleverly floating along in the organization while others did the hard work—would quit practicing the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

In any event, low-minded people, those who live only for selfish interests, and those who use the world of faith to gain personal prestige, may at first appear to be practicing the Daishonin’s Buddhism. Unless they make ceaseless efforts to develop and grow in their Buddhist practice, however, they often end up betraying and attacking the Soka Gakkai.

We have seen many such sorry individuals. Often, they have the mentality of persons of the two vehicles—people of the worlds of Learning and Realization (voice-hearers and cause-awakened ones) who seek only their own enlightenment without helping others. These people tend to think that they know more than anyone else and, in their arrogance, lose faith. We have also seen many who have achieved high positions thanks to the support of the Soka Gakkai members but have then grown arrogant and fallen into the abysmal path of ingratitude.

The so-called Dharma sword of Buddhism—the workings of the causal law of life—will no doubt pass strict judgment on the likes of such people.

The Daishonin writes in “Letter from Sado”: “There are also those who appeared to believe in me, but began doubting when they saw me persecuted. They not only have forsaken the Lotus Sutra, but also actually think themselves wise enough to instruct me. The pitiful thing is that these perverse people must suffer in the Avichi hell even longer than the Nembutsu believers” (WND, 306).

The fate of such traitors is always misery. Their end is truly wretched. No matter how cleverly they may speak and manipulate the mass media in order to justify themselves, all that is left to them, having betrayed their fellow members and their mentor, is a life of failure and defeat.

*Weathering the storms  
Of countless harsh attacks,  
The citadel of Soka  
Flourishes more than ever.*

No matter what kind of devious attacks may be directed against us, no matter what vile plots and intrigues, nothing can halt our advance for kosen-rufu. This is the beautiful Soka Spirit shared by mentor and disciple who are bound by strong faith. It is our honor and glory. It is our supreme pride.