

## FROM 'MY DEAR FRIENDS IN AMERICA' THE MYSTIC LAW GIVES NEW LIFE TO ALL KNOWLEDGE

**‘When based on the Mystic Law, all laws of the world and society begin to function in their most valuable way,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘All endeavors in human society — politics, economics, learning and so on — become revitalized. They come to display their full potential and attain new life.’**

*From SGI President Ikeda’s speech at a youth training meeting held at Soka University of America, Calabasas, Calif., Oct. 1, 1991.*

Yesterday, at the conference for leaders of the United States and Canada, I talked briefly about the reasons for Nikko Shonin’s departure from Mount Minobu.

The fundamental cause for his departure lay with the decadent priest Mambu Niko [one of the five senior priests], who tolerated and even encouraged slanderous actions on the part of Hakiri Sanenaga, the steward of the area. This caused the area of Minobu [where Nichiren Daishonin spent the latter years of his life] to become defiled.

Among Niko’s perverse views were his accusations that Nikko Shonin indulged in non-Buddhist literature. [Non-Buddhist literature here indicates Brahman writings of India, the Confucian and Taoist works of China, and general, secular and literary works. In some cases, the term is used to indicate scholarly writings and the Chinese classics, which at the time were considered the basic foundation of all learning, much as the liberal arts are today.]

Nikko Shonin strictly upheld the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin as revealed in “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.” Based on this spirit, he instructed Hakiri that for him to make pilgrimages to Shinto shrines was [against the Daishonin’s teaching and therefore] impermissible.

Hakiri thereupon sought the counsel of Niko. Niko told Hakiri: “Being a person who indulges in non-Buddhist literature, Nikko reads ‘On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land’ from that perspective, and so he fails to grasp its more profound meaning.” He thus undermined Hakiri’s trust in Nikko Shonin.

Nikko Shonin cites Niko’s words in the letter, “Reply to Lord Hara,” saying: “[Mambu Ajari Niko answered Hakiri’s queries, saying:] ‘That the tutelary benevolent deities have abandoned this country is written in “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.” However, Byakuren Ajari [Nikko Shonin], basing himself on non-Buddhist scriptures, reads it in a biased manner and so is incapable of understanding its true intention’” (*Hennentai Goshō*, p. 1731).

Niko contradicted the Daishonin’s teaching in telling Hakiri that it was therefore all right to visit Shinto shrines. Furthermore, he told him to visit shrines as often as he wished on the grounds that the Buddhist gods would gather at a shrine if a person who embraced the Lotus Sutra went there to pray.

Hakiri placed his complete trust in this false teaching, which allowed him to do as he wished. “Niko is a priest who can be reasoned with,” Hakiri probably thought with delight. Almost invariably, a lay person’s deviation from the Daishonin’s teaching can be traced to the influence of a decadent priest skilled at accommodating the demands of lay people [regardless of what is correct from the standpoint of Buddhism].

To Hakiri—who had lost his faith—the admonitions of Nikko Shonin, who strictly protected the Daishonin’s teaching by staunchly refuting slander, had already become little more than a source of irritation.

Nikko Shonin declared Niko’s tolerance of slander to be “the workings of the devil king,” “a betrayal of the late mentor” and “[an offense equal in gravity to committing] the seven cardinal sins.” If someone who is charged with responsibility for protecting and spreading the Daishonin’s teaching willfully distorts and arbitrarily alters the teaching, then the actions of such a person certainly represent the workings of the devil. They are the actions of a priest of the greatest evil, who is guilty of betraying the mentor and committing the seven cardinal sins. This is what Nikko Shonin taught.

These historical facts contain an important lesson.

First of all, those who betrayed the mentor [Nichiren Daishonin] after his death all sought to justify themselves by making reference to some “more profound meaning” contained in his teaching, despite all documentary proof to the contrary.

In Buddhism, the offense of betraying the mentor is extremely grave. It amounts to destroying the very life of Buddhism. People who do so try to win acceptance for their false views by saying, “You should listen to what I say, irrespective of what my mentor wrote.” And if someone presents them with written proof that shows their words or actions to be wrong, they try to gloss over the contradiction by saying: “That is a superficial level of interpretation. The true meaning is found elsewhere.”

In exactly this manner, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood is contradicting the Goshō and the guidance given by the successive high priests, desecrating them and attempting to consign them to oblivion. [A contemporary example of this is found in the priesthood’s abrupt denial of High Priest Nittatsu’s view on the significance of the Grand Main Temple. This view had served as a fundamental guideline for both priests and lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu for more than twenty years. Yet now the priesthood claims claim that “the former high priest’s true intention is not contained in his official statements but is found elsewhere.”]

### **‘Although the mentor has died, his writings remain.’**

Nikko Shonin came to learn that Hakiri, in a quandary over whether it was permissible for him to make pilgrimages to Shinto shrines, had been making such remarks as: “The priests in the Kamakura area (followers of the five senior priests) say it is all right for me to go, but Nikko Shonin of Minobu has told me that I must not. Who should I listen to now that the Daishonin has died?”

Thereupon, Nikko Shonin strictly instructed him: “Although the mentor has died, his writings remain. This is in ‘On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land’” (*Hennentai Goshō*, p. 1731). When the Daishonin is no longer in the world, it is his writings that we should make our mentor. So long as we continue practicing in accordance with the Goshō, what possible cause for confusion can there be? Here Nikko Shonin teaches the fundamental attitude for the Daishonin’s followers.

What a remarkable contrast between the attitude of Nikko Shonin, who made the Goshō his foundation, and that of Niko, who based himself on his own personal views and neglected the Goshō!

We in the SGI are advancing in perfect accord with the teaching of Nikko Shonin, who represents the treasure of the Priest, as we make the Goshō our foundation. At the same time, we are now witnessing the appearance of the followers of Niko within Nichiren Shoshu.

## **People look down on the correct teacher due to ignorance.**

We must also bear the following lesson in mind: People who betray their mentor criticize those who strictly observe the mentor's teaching and interpret that teaching themselves in a biased manner as being non-Buddhist. In disparaging the correct interpretation as being "similar to non-Buddhist literature" or "a superficial reading," such persons, in their arrogance, suggest that they themselves have grasped the ultimate teaching of Buddhism when in fact they have not.

Thus, SGI members, too, while faithfully observing the precept that they strictly admonish slander, have come to be accused of "revering non-Buddhist teachings." We can regard this as an honorable badge of proof that we are indeed heirs to the legacy of Nikko Shonin.

Niko went so far as to brand non-Buddhist literature per se as evil. Nikko Shonin refutes this extreme and distorted view, saying: "The Daishonin's 'On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land' was written based on the style of non-Buddhist literature. The letter, sent in the eighth year of Bun'ei, was likewise written in the style of non-Buddhist works. In addition, the Lotus Sutra was written by the people in China most well versed in non-Buddhist literature, and for this reason it stands out among all of the Buddhist sutras for its style.

"In expounding this doctrine now, I would like to have someone who is well versed in non-Buddhist literature commit it to writing. Without an understanding of both Buddhist and non-Buddhist writings, I believe it will be extremely difficult to establish the Buddhist Law and to secure the land" (*Hennentai Gosho*, p. 1734).

Not only does he refute Niko's accusations about his "indulging in non-Buddhist literature" and about "non-Buddhist literature being false," but Nikko Shonin goes on to state that unless one incorporates the literary style and knowledge of non-Buddhist writings in attempting to introduce people to Buddhism, it will be impossible to "establish the Buddhist Law and to secure the land."

The 59th high priest, Ni-chiko, commented on the mistaken views of Niko: "His views certainly arose from a sheer lack of knowledge, and no doubt there were many priests and lay believers of little understanding who sympathized with him. In other words, I assume that his notions were based on the vulgar conventionalisms of the dark age [in terms of literature] of the Kamakura period, and that he simply used such accepted ideas to put down the teacher Nikko" (from *Fuji Nikko Shonin Shoden* [Detailed Accounts of Nikko Shonin of the Fuji School]).

In other words, Niko's defamatory remarks and false views were either due to his own lack of knowledge or were employed as part of an attempt to attack Nikko Shonin by appealing to the ideas of the uneducated masses.

We must cultivate in ourselves the light of intelligence. We must positively bring an end to the "dark age" [of Nichiren Shoshu].

## **Capable people must master both Buddhist and non-Buddhist teachings.**

Just as Nikko Shonin states, without an understanding of both Buddhist and non-Buddhist writings, neither realizing peace ("securing the land") nor accomplishing kosen-rufu ("establishing the Buddhist Law") will be possible. In addition, Nikko Shonin indicates that capable people who are well versed in both realms of Buddhist and secular knowledge are necessary.

In particular, young people, basing themselves on Buddhism, must study hard, avidly

seeking to expand their grasp of the knowledge and wisdom of the world.

In article eight of “The Twenty-six Admonitions,” Nikko Shonin states: “Those who, lacking a thorough understanding of Buddhism, are bent on obtaining fame and fortune are not qualified to call themselves my followers” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618).

The failure of Nichiren Shoshu priests to observe this admonition is no doubt one of the factors underlying the current situation. Moreover, priests have practically no knowledge about the world and lack the desire to study.

They nevertheless imperiously command us to show them greater respect (concern for fame) and increase the amount of our donations (concern for wealth). Just whose disciples are they anyway?

### **All of Nikko Shonin’s spiritual heirs are included in the treasure of the Priest.**

“The Twenty-Six Admonitions” also states, “Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability without begrudging your life” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618). We SGI members are putting this admonition into practice.

In the postscript to these “Twenty-six Admonitions,” which were originally set forth as guidelines for priests, Nikko Shonin clearly states: “A person who violates even one of these articles cannot be called a disciple of Nikko” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1619).

By following Nikko Shonin, who alone represents the treasure of the Priest in its entirety, the members of both the priesthood and laity, in a broad sense, partially take on the significance of the treasure of the Priest. It is only too obvious, therefore, that any priests who go against Nikko Shonin’s admonitions are naturally not to be regarded as representing the treasure of the Priest.

If priests, while calling themselves the Daishonin’s disciples, demonstrate a blatant willingness to accommodate slanderous practices and belittle the value of the Gosho and, while calling themselves disciples of Nikko Shonin, conduct themselves in exactly the same manner as Niko, then they are destroying the three treasures of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

In any event, it can be definitely stated that the poorer people’s breadth of study, the more prone they will be to brand those who are earnestly striving to promote kosen-rufu as persons who “indulge in non-Buddhist teachings.”

### **The SGI is perpetuating the orthodox lineage of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.**

Niko, revealing his superficial understanding of Buddhism, profaned Nikko Shonin by calling him a non-Buddhist. Nikko Shonin, on the other hand, thoroughly understood Buddhism and strongly urged his disciples to study non-Buddhist teachings as well.

This highlights two contrasting attitudes toward Buddhism: one that confines Buddhism to a limited, esoteric realm concerning only a small number of specialists, and one that takes the broader view that all laws and phenomena of the universe are part of Buddhism.

Simply put, Niko’s was a dead Buddhism, while that taught by Nikko Shonin was a living Buddhism. We of the SGI are perpetuating the orthodox lineage of this dynamic, vibrant Buddhism.

How can one propagate the Daishonin’s Buddhism without knowing about various other teachings that exist in the world? Just as second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda taught, when based on the Mystic Law, all laws of the world and society begin to function in their

most valuable way. All endeavors in human society — politics, economics, learning and so on — become revitalized. They come to display their full potential and attain new life. The lifeblood of Buddhism pulses within society. If it is cut off from secular affairs, Buddhism's full validity cannot be revealed.

Niko might also have been jealous of Nikko Shonin's extensive knowledge and learning. The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard claimed that when action and passion disappear, the world is dominated by jealousy. This argument was the heart of his criticism against the modern world — against evil wisdom that strives to pull everything down to the same level [irrespective of the level of excellence or baseness].

### **Buddhism gains life only in correct faith.**

Buddhism's mission must be to impart dynamism to the society and the age in which it is practiced and to the people who practice it. In one of his lectures, President Toda once fielded this question: "You said Buddhism became extinct in India and China, yet many sutras still exist in these countries, don't they?"

President Toda spoke forcefully: "There may be sutras, but sutras are by no means Buddhism. They are just books! For without faith, sutras are nothing more than books. No matter how many sutras and temples there may be in these countries, their Buddhism is already dead."

For example, even though a temple may possess original writings in the Daishonin's own hand, if that temple embarks on a heretical course, then it does not possess the lifeblood of the Daishonin's Buddhism. The lifeblood of Buddhism exists only in the correct faith actually manifested in people's lives. Correct faith — the vehicle of the lifeblood of Buddhism — is transmitted through the mentor-disciple relationship. Only when we follow the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin can we perpetuate the pure flow of the Daishonin's Buddhism for eternity. Should we follow the corrupt stream of Niko, who betrayed his mentor's teachings, we would commit the serious offense of destroying the heart of Buddhism.

The traitorous Niko attempted to destroy the Daishonin's Buddhism in many ways. Nikko Shonin, meanwhile, though having to endure the insult of being called a non-Buddhist, strictly abided by his mentor's teaching and protected the lifeblood of Buddhism. This contrast is a mirror that reflects the truth, now and always.

I sincerely hope that you, my young friends, will develop the SGI organization in the United States into the foremost in the world. Please take good care of the center of the worldwide kosen-rufu movement. Thank you and congratulations on today's gathering.