

**Q&A ON FAITH**  
**WHAT'S OUR PERSPECTIVE TOWARD**  
**OBJECTS FROM OTHER RELIGIONS?**  
**BY TED MORINO, SGI-USA STUDY DEPARTMENT SENIOR ADVISOR**

How can I encourage a member who is wondering what to do with objects from a different religion?

Before answering this question directly, I would like to address some basics. Buddhism teaches that happiness lies in developing our innate Buddhahood while at the same time cherishing our individuality. It also teaches that one source of suffering is our undue attachment to what is shallow and incorrect.

Nichiren Daishonin refuted the Buddhist schools of his time out of his awareness that their teachings twisted the Buddha's intent and guided the people away from the heart of the Lotus Sutra. They were in fact preventing people from cultivating their human potential.

While using the name of Buddhism, the major schools of the Kamakura period of Japan were actually propounding teachings that in one way or another ran counter to the Lotus Sutra's intent to allow all people to fully realize that they are essentially Buddhas and to manifest their Buddha nature.

For instance, the Pure Land sect (Nembutsu) leads its followers to abhor the reality of this world and yearn for an imaginary paradise after death. Such belief ultimately deprives one of hope and weakens one's life force, leading one to abandon developing one's full human potential in this life.

Slander in Buddhism is to deny the original intent and spirit of the Buddha as expressed in the Lotus Sutra and crystallized in the Daishonin's teachings. The mere act of possessing objects of other religious schools or traditions does not in itself constitute slander. We should make this point clear, first of all.

Practically speaking, we can view people's attitudes toward religious items in two ways: First, if they attribute to such items a power over their lives, they probably need to change their attachment to the religious belief or thought that compels them to do so. To help them do so is the practice of *shakubuku*. We need to encourage them to positively practice the Daishonin's Buddhism to the point where they are no longer undermining their own power.

Secondly, if they feel the object is valuable to them as a work of art, cultural treasure or family heirloom, they may choose to keep it. In any case, the person who possesses such items is the one who should judge what to do with them.

The mere possession of a religious object does not determine either one's happiness or unhappiness. Buddhism focuses on people's life-conditions as the determining factor. SGI President Ikeda thus states, "Following the same path as the Buddha means accepting and upholding the Lotus Sutra; that is, to engrave in one's life the Buddha's spirit as revealed in the Lotus Sutra and to live in accord with that spirit" (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 2, p. 98).

Buddhism is called "the in-ner way" because it encourages self-examination. In other words, Buddhism encourages us to polish our lives to the extent that we can clearly know what we should hold on to and what we should let go of. In this vein, Nichiren Daishonin states, "It is the heart that is important" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1000).