

Extract from Volume 10 of The Human Revolution

CHAPTER DETERMINATION

Part 1

January 4, 1956, was a cold day in Osaka. The chilly rain, which had started early in the morning, let up in the afternoon and stopped in the evening, but the sky remained overcast. Shin'ichi Yamamoto had left on the *Swallow*, the nine o'clock special express from Tokyo, and arrived at the Soka Gakkai's Kansai Headquarters in the evening. Pausing outside of the entrance, he stood in the street and surveyed the three-story structure. It's an old building, he thought to himself, but it seems larger than the Headquarters in Tokyo. [...]

Shin'ichi Yamamoto entered the Gohonzon room and knelt before the altar. Together with the twenty or thirty top leaders who had been awaiting his arrival, he began to do gongyo. His voice was taut, yet it showed not a hint of strain. Rich and sonorous, his voice permeated the frosty air in the room, changing the whole atmosphere in a matter of moments. The leaders, reciting the sutra, unconsciously sat up even straighter. Before they realized it, they had become one with Shin'ichi in his profound prayer and had totally forgotten about the cold. By the time they began chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, strong, single-minded prayers rose up almost tangibly from among them.

For a short while after gongyo was over, Shin'ichi remained looking straight at the Gohonzon. Then he turned to face the leaders. "This is a tremendous Gohonzon," he said in an impassioned tone, overcome with emotion. Once again he cast his eyes upon the Gohonzon. "'Prosperity of the Great Law and fulfilment of all prayers,'" he read each word out slowly. "The inscription clearly declares that the supreme Law will prosper in Kansai and fulfil all of your prayers.

"This is a fantastic Gohonzon. With this we are certain to win the Kansai campaign!" Taken by his excitement, the leaders stared at the Gohonzon as if they were seeing it for the first time. Sure enough, there on the right side was the inscription Shin'ichi had mentioned. And on the left was written, "Bestowed for enshrining at the Kansai Headquarters of the Soka Gakkai, at the request of Josei Toda." [...]

The Soka Gakkai had achieved a handsome victory in the nationwide regional representative elections conducted on April 30, 1955. Immediately, the organization began to consider entering its candidates in the fourth election scheduled for 1956. Tactical conferences were held several times with Josei Toda. But since the campaign required careful and meticulous planning, it was not until early October that the final decision was made: three candidates would run for national office and two in the local elections. Toda put full responsibility for the campaign in the Osaka prefectural constituency directly on the shoulders of Shin'ichi Yamamoto. [...]

When Shin'ichi heard what Toda expected of him in the forthcoming Kansai campaign, he responded to his teacher's call without a moment's hesitation. However, even at that moment he was all too painfully aware of the wide gap that lay between reality and the goal.

At first Shin'ichi sank into despair. Although he told no one, he was in constant torment, day in and day out, with the baffling problem of how to unfold the campaign. In the midst of his painful search for a solution he was about to scream out in agony, when one after another, like rising clouds, passages of the Goshō appeared in his mind. These passages sharply pointed out to him how to turn the impossible into the possible.

They told him that the key to victory did not necessarily lie in numerical strength but in the indestructible unity of even a few people and clearly revealed that the power of faith was unlimited. After all, wasn't he a believer of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in the Latter Day? If the Daishonin's teachings were true, then there was no way that he could fail to prove them. Did not the Goshō

state, “Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other” (WND, 1001)? Shin’ichi now thoroughly realized that the only thing he could count on were the Gohonzon and the Gosho.

Shin’ichi began by determining to win the victory and then traced the process backwards to decide on the first step to be taken in the campaign. To achieve the goal, it was essential to at least double the present membership. If this were realized, victory waited at the end of the road, no matter how severe it might be along the way. Very well, Shin’ichi thought. In order to double the current strength, the members would have to be participating happily in their movement to spread Buddhism.

This, in turn, demanded that they be sufficiently inspired and encouraged to increase their power of faith and strengthen their prayers to the Gohonzon. They had been practicing for only a short time. They must first of all be deeply convinced of how truly great and valid Nichiren Buddhism was. They must realize the righteousness of his teaching through documentary, theoretical and actual proof so that a whirlpool of joy—the joy of faith—would emerge.

As luck would have it, Shin’ichi was the lecturer in charge of the candidates for the Study Department. First of all, he decided he would encourage the members in Kansai, which he liked so well, through the study of Buddhism. The faces of his dear friends in that area appeared one after another to his mind’s eye—faces bright with determination. Beginning that autumn every word and phrase he spoke in his lectures was filled with an almost extraordinary enthusiasm. [...]

He could not allow the campaign to end in failure for two reasons. First, the defeat would frustrate one of President Toda’s plans. Second, it would mean that Shin’ichi would have lost his first full-scale battle for kosen-rufu. It would be a tremendous setback in his life, a life dedicated to a supreme mission. He must win by all means. If this campaign, his first, ended in triumph, it would become the source from which all his future endeavours would spring.

If the beginning sets the pattern for what follows, then there is no other alternative but to achieve a victory. He did not know it at the time, but he was later to realize that this was the very campaign that proved his capability, the battle which decided his course in life. Shin’ichi was firmly resolved to endure, no matter what efforts he might be forced to make or what hardships he might face, until he achieved his goal. He had stood up alone. [...]

From October to December, Shin’ichi was kept constantly busy, attending meetings that required his presence and handling the affairs he alone could manage. However, not for a moment could he forget the forthcoming campaign in Osaka. His inability to forget reflected the agonizing concern he felt. No one was aware of his mental anguish but Toda.

One day toward the end of the year Toda addressed Shin’ichi sympathetically. His remark was abrupt, and he neither worked up to it nor elaborated on it. “A life filled with suffering is a life truly lived, Shin. Only by going through suffering will one be able to understand what faith really is. That’s what makes you a great man.”

“Yes sir,” Shin’ichi replied briefly. So his mentor knew the torment he was going through. Shin’ichi felt indescribably grateful. “I now exist for Mr. Toda,” he reflected to himself and felt peace in his heart. Physically, however, he felt totally exhausted, what with the tremendous effort he had been making every moment over the past few months. He even suffered several bouts of nausea on New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day. As was the custom, he attended the New Year’s gongyo at the Headquarters. Following that, he joined Toda’s party and went to the head temple.

Mount Fuji loomed against the clear sky as he made his way to the Hoanden Hall where he offered a profound prayer to the Gohonzon about the campaign in Osaka. While chanting, he felt a certain tough resilience start to quietly replace the despondency in his heart. He kept sensing something. A thought suddenly occurred to him. It was as if he had finally obtained a clear-cut answer to the question he had asked himself in the depths of his heart for the past several months.

The sudden thought was that the Lotus Sutra was the strategy of a general. So that's what it was, Shin'ichi thought. The Gohonzon and faith—everything depended on them. No matter what the age or the situation, the qualification of Buddhist leaders was whether they could employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra as generals. Shin'ichi's mind was racing like a quickly turning kaleidoscope as the chanting ended. [...]

As scheduled, on the night of January 4 he gave a lecture to the seventh class of candidates for the Study Department. Well more than two hundred people gathered in the large hall on the first floor. The appointment examination was only eleven days away. They strained their ears to listen to the lecture, trying to understand the final part of "The Entity of the Mystic Law," one of the most difficult Goshos. The section began with the sentence, "Question: In our present age, the period of the Latter Day of the Law, who has obtained the lotus of the entity?" (WND vol 1, 429).

Shin'ichi went line by line, expanding on each sentence from every possible angle. He told the audience that, in the final analysis, only they, the disciples of Nichiren Daishonin, could perceive the entity of the Mystic Law and attain Buddhahood. After describing that state of absolute happiness in a way they could almost feel, he concluded that it all depended on their faith in the Daishonin's teaching and on their practice of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Next came the question-and-answer session. Many hands shot up all at once. "I think 'The Entity of the Mystic Law' is a terribly difficult Goshu," one man said. "One part reads, 'The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai in his *Great Concentration and Insight* states, 'Ignorance or illusions are in themselves enlightenment to the essential nature of phenomena. But due to the influence of delusions, enlightenment changes into ignorance'" (WND vol 1, 418). What does this mean anyway? I just don't understand it."

Shin'ichi nodded, smiling. "When we read 'The Entity of the Mystic Law' and the Daishonin's other writings, we clearly realize how stupid we are. Earlier in today's lecture we learned why it is so difficult for us to understand the Daishonin's Buddhism. It is because we either believed in erroneous religions or slandered the Gohonzon in the past. That's why it takes us a long time to perceive the entity of enlightenment. The cause of the dullness in our minds can also be traced back to slanderous acts in the past. But it doesn't follow that our minds will become clear and brilliant just as soon as we take faith in the True Law.

By earnestly devoting ourselves to practice and study, however, we'll come to readily understand any part of the Goshu. Right now we are just wandering along. But don't worry about it. Just continue your sincere practice and study, and the time will certainly come when you'll grow wise enough to understand the Goshu without difficulty. You may hear my explanation and say, 'Oh, now I see what the passage means,' but I'm not so sure that you really do, because some delusion still remains. Anyway, I'll explain the passage as much as my poor knowledge will allow."

He addressed the questioner. "You're probably stumped by the sentence, 'But due to the influence of delusions, enlightenment changes into ignorance,' isn't that right? We are always bewildered by illusions, but in truth they are part of our intrinsic nature—this is what you think is so strange, isn't that correct?"

"Yes, yes. That's the strange part." The honest reply provoked a roar of laughter from the others. Shin'ichi waited until it subsided.

"In T'ien-t'ai's *Great Concentration and Insight* there is a well-known passage which states, 'The emergence of all things is the manifestation of their intrinsic nature, and their extinction, the withdrawal of that nature into the state of latency.' In simpler terms, the intrinsic nature signifies our life at a single moment—in other words, the essential nature of the Law. I think it is easier to understand that way. Theoretically, it indicates life itself. Delusion indicates the nine worlds. The sentence says that it has as its essence the enlightened nature of the Law. In a nutshell, it means that ignorance also originates in the Mystic Law, or one's life."

As Shin'ichi went on, his listeners felt an indescribably warm, electrifying current flowing in their hearts. Their surging faith seemed to have brought them to the best Goshō lecture of all. "Then what changes enlightenment into ignorance? Illusions do. A life filled with illusions is impure, while one free from them is pure. When impurity prevails, enlightenment is transformed into darkness. "The Daishonin clearly perceived that principle. For this reason, he left the Gohonzon with us people in the Latter Day of the Law. He taught us that by praying to the Gohonzon we can completely purify our defiled nature every time. That's why faith is essential to human life and why you must sincerely practice. Doing so, you'll find your minds becoming clearer. Everything will go as you wish, and before you know it you'll be on the road to true happiness. I may not have been very thorough, but I hope you have gained some understanding about this passage. Please keep going over it until you've mastered it."

Other questions followed. Even when the time was up, the audience hated to let go of Shin'ichi. He told them he couldn't answer any more questions because he had to attend the guidance meeting for youth division group leaders assembled in the third-floor hall. [...]

Shin'ichi was determined to give thorough guidance to each one of the Kansai members because he knew it to be the key to the entire campaign. The more difficult the goal, the more necessary it was for each member to be joyfully striving to fulfill the objective. That was an absolute requirement that could never be satisfied unless the members all stood up together on the basis of faith.

For this to happen, he first devoted all his energy to developing one member's faith at a time. He was determined to do as much as time and his own physical strength permitted. He would meet as many members as possible, get to know all about them and their troubles, and do everything in his power to give them courageous faith.

The next day Shin'ichi was already living up to his determination so that others could follow suit. He threw himself into creating an eddy of joyful activities. That day he devoted all his time to individual guidance. He met anyone who came to the Kansai Headquarters, whether they were leaders or not. Praying that not a single one would drop out during the campaign, he encouraged them heart and soul. Guidance continued from ten o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening, with Shin'ichi displaying an almost frightening strength of spirit.

Since President Makiguchi's day, the traditional pattern of guidance had been one-to-one dialogue, personal guidance aimed at opening up new horizons in the heart of the listener. It was no surprise that the problems brought to Shin'ichi on January 5 were numerous and varied. Some people suffered from illnesses for which medical science had no cure. Others faced financial difficulties they could not overcome no matter how hard they worked. Still others were afflicted with troubles between husband and wife or parent and child that neither ethics nor morality could solve.

They all, of course, were tremendously worried. They had taken faith and been told they could rid themselves of their troubles. Finding that it wasn't all that easy, understandably enough, they had become extremely impatient for a solution and many began to harbour doubts about Nichiren Buddhism. They brought their problems to this still young man, Shin'ichi Yamamoto.

Shin'ichi took all the problems upon himself. In each case he began by leading the members to recognize that their sufferings arose from the question of karma. Then he explained the Buddhist teaching about life existing throughout the past, the present and the future. In light of this principle they should first strive to solve the fundamental problem of karma. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism exists for this purpose. He told them this with conviction and related a number of experiences to illustrate his point.

He placed prime emphasis on enabling each person to summon up his power of faith. In most cases he saw their expressions visibly soften as feelings of relief, warmth and joy appeared in his listeners' hearts. By the time they left, all of them were marveling at this young leader, Shin'ichi Yamamoto, who had counseled them as sincerely as if their problems were his own.

Shin'ichi ate a quick supper. The district leaders' meeting was scheduled to begin shortly. All the senior leaders in the Kansai area would be there. He lay down for a while, utterly exhausted by the guidance session. But when the time came, he forced himself to get up again and made his way to the Gohonzon room on the third floor. "Good evening," he said amicably, in the local accent. The participants answered in unison with their unique style. "It's been a long time since we last met. Are you all well?"

"Yes, we are." Their unanimous reply signalled they were already prepared for the dialogue. As might be expected at a leaders' meeting, none of them were looking down. All eyes were trained on Shin'ichi as if searching for the key to the forthcoming campaign. Here goes, he proclaimed in his heart, mustering all his strength.

"Since my arrival yesterday, I've been praying to the Gohonzon enshrined in this room," he began. "It is a marvellous Gohonzon. It promises that the supreme Law will prosper in Kansai and fulfil all of our wishes. Since it says so, the rest depends on the strength of our prayer and action. That's all there is to it. Those two things are all we need. My dear friends, now that we have this Gohonzon in Kansai, why don't we all offer a really great prayer together?" A thunder of applause and cheers roared from the audience.

Shin'ichi's spirit penetrated the leaders' hearts. But, as excited as they were, none knew what their great prayer should be. They waited in rapt attention. Shin'ichi revealed that their great prayer would be to win the Osaka prefectural constituency election scheduled for July. "I'll be frank with you because you are all senior leaders," he said. Then he detailed how poor was their strength in Kansai and how far they were from victory. He knew that only the truth would help them make firm resolutions. When the leaders learned the alarming situation, their faces became visibly clouded with disappointment—theirs would be a futile campaign.

"Anyone would think that victory is impossible," Shin'ichi said, "and that's probably how you feel right now. But don't forget this marvellous Gohonzon we have. It has the power to transform what you'd normally think impossible into something possible. Those who give up before they try don't really know the power of the Mystic Law.

"Nichiren Daishonin is clear on this. In the final passage of 'On Rebuking Slander of the Law and Eradicating Sins,' he states, 'I am praying that, no matter how troubled the times may become, the Lotus Sutra and the ten demon daughters will protect all of you, praying as earnestly as though to produce fire from damp wood, or to obtain water from parched ground' (WND vol 1, 444). The Daishonin wrote this letter to Shijo Kingo from Sado Island. He himself was in exile, but he was concerned only about the safety of his disciples who were at that time suffering persecution in faraway Kamakura. This passage shows us his profound mercy to pray with all his heart that the heavenly gods would protect his disciples in any way possible.

"Their society was in chaos, but the Daishonin could not go to the aid of his disciples. Being on Sado, there was nothing he could do physically. However, as he says in this Goshō, he continued to pray strongly, as determinedly as if to get fire from water-logged wood or draw water from dry ground. Here he shows us how to pray to the Gohonzon at a time of trial.

"As long as we look at our situation with only ordinary reason, there won't be the slightest chance for us to win. But the Daishonin tells us plainly that the Gohonzon has infinite power. The only question is whether or not we believe him. If we think that we are really disciples of the Daishonin, we first have to pray powerfully to carry out the kind of courageous practice that can make the impossible possible."

Shin'ichi went on to explain the universal existence of the Mystic Law by talking about the Daishonin's examples of flowers coming from wood and fire coming from stone. "For instance, think of a cherry tree in the wintertime," he said. "No matter how closely you look at it or how many minute pieces you cut it into, you will never find where its flowers come from. But when it finally

becomes spring, countless beautiful blossoms will come forth. Again, no matter how carefully you look at a rock or how many pieces you break it into, you will never discover any fire. But when you strike a rock, especially flint, you can always get it to spark.” These facts, Shin’ichi stressed, illustrate how the Mystic Law, although invisible, pervades the entire universe.

“What I’ve said so far can also be explained in terms of our own lives,” he continued emphatically. “Many of our members once gave up all hope of ever attaining happiness in this lifetime. But as they devoted themselves to faith, they started to become happy and free from worry before they realized it. We have seen and heard of many such cases. They are proof that our practice and strong prayers can turn the impossible into the possible in our lives. I want you to know that this is what faith in the Mystic Law is all about. By now you have probably realized that our campaign can only begin with the single-minded prayers of each member in Kansai. When all members pray to the Gohonzon with one mind, they will naturally find a way opening before them—a way to make the impossible possible.