

Extract from Volume 10 of The Human Revolution

CHAPTER DETERMINATION

Part 2

“You members in Kansai have this wonderful Gohonzon as the starting point of your faith. If I weren’t able to convince you of its power and, as a result, our campaign failed, I know my heart would break with pity for you. But don’t worry. I have prayed to the Gohonzon with all my strength, imploring that we win...no matter what.”

The audience felt Shin’ichi’s ardent words suddenly lifting their spirits. Perfect silence reigned over the assembly. Deep in their hearts old blocks crumbled away and in its place a new confidence was rapidly forming. Moment by moment this freshness was changing the life-condition of all the leaders in Kansai.

Before long, the whole organization would be fully coordinated like one great living organism. Shin’ichi’s determination, coming as it did from his profound prayer and infinite, painstaking efforts, was strong enough to make a one hundred eighty degree shift in the life-state of the leaders assembled that night.

“Please take good care of all of the members who have given you their confidence,” he went on. “All who embrace the Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law are precious children of Nichiren Daishonin. Never treat them lightly or belittle them. Go out and meet them, everyone. Listen to everything they have to say. Then talk with them sincerely and kindly until they are thoroughly convinced that by continuing their faith they can solve their agonizing problems without fail. Teach them that the key is for them to strengthen their own faith and encourage others to do the same. [...]

“One more thing,” he continued. “As you know, the appointment examinations for the Study Department will be held in another ten days. Please make sure that the candidates study diligently so that they can all pass. By taking good care of them in study, you are giving them superb guidance in faith.

“I already have plans for after the exam. When I spoke of making the impossible possible, I didn’t mean to say that I have thought up some fantastic idea or other. The important thing is for us to carry on a steady practice and not make any mistakes. We have to continually develop our faith, never slackening our efforts even for a moment. We will have to stick to our practice straight through to the end—always based on fervent prayers.

“I trust and respect you from the bottom of my heart. You may think I am going overboard to say so, but I am very fond of the Kansai members. Believe me, I really care for them. My heart breaks even to think of the great grief my friends in Kansai would suffer if we lost the campaign. My determination will never waver. I will win without fail—for your sake, and for your sake alone. From here on I may make seemingly impossible demands upon you. When I do, please remember that neither you nor I will have anything to regret later as a result.”

Shin’ichi’s words had convinced the leaders. Now they agreed completely with him. He had taken great pains to give them a clear idea of what they had to do and explained each point

from every possible angle. They realized for the first time that this was the kind of strict and yet warm-hearted guidance they had longed for all along. It was guidance truly worthy of the name. Even so, they still had not realized that they were synchronized to Shin'ichi as to a million-volt motor because they had not yet put their own torque to work.

Shin'ichi wiped beads of sweat from his brow. The room was cold with the chill of a winter night, but the leaders were also perspiring. Their eyes remained riveted on Shin'ichi. Seeing their intense concentration, he was happy. He glanced at his wristwatch. There was still some time left.

"So our campaign will begin with the strong prayers of all the members in Kansai," he resumed. "But are fervent, single-minded prayers enough? No, they are not. Listen carefully so you won't misunderstand. Chanting is only the first step. The second factor is to use the best strategy and the most effective action. Without this second part we will never be able to gain the initiative to win. Neither the first nor the second factor alone is enough. Only when both are perfectly harmonized can the impossible become possible. Then, and only then, will victory be ours. I could not be more convinced of this. Then what brings about this harmony? Faith does. This is why I keep stressing that faith is the basis of everything. Do you understand? [...]"

"Yes, very clear," replied the audience in unison, nodding deeply. In their hearts they were shouting, "Let's go! We'll fight with all our strength!" [...]"

In this manner, Shin'ichi Yamamoto commenced his historic Kansai campaign in 1956. He was not aware that it would be historic, however. Nor did he consider that he was making infinite exertion in a single moment. All he knew was that he thought more deeply, racked his brains harder and was more firmly resolved to win than ever before. Accordingly, he dedicated himself wholeheartedly to his practice day and night.

A phrase describing Bodhisattvas of the Earth in the fifteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra reads, "Day and night with constant diligence/they may seek the Buddha way" (LS, 220). He had been continually devoting himself to his activities, valiantly following the way of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, just as this phrase described. Unnoticed, he had struggled and worried for several months before going to Osaka that January day.

In "The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," Nichiren Daishonin interprets the above phrase as follows: "If you exert one-hundred million aeons of effort in a single moment of life, the three bodies [of the Buddha] that have always existed in your life will emerge and dwell within your mind from moment to moment. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is an assiduous practice" (GZ, 790).

Shin'ichi Yamamoto was taking infinite pains every single moment, and as the result of his dedicated practice, enlightened Buddha wisdom imbued his mind. There was a profound reason, therefore, that every action he took during the unparalleled Kansai campaign in 1956 would prove to be exactly the right move, as he turned the impossible into possible at every juncture. [...]"

In 1955, the number of new members receiving the Gohonzon in the two Kansai chapters—Osaka and Sakai—marked a fantastic increase, a phenomenon almost without equal in other chapters across the nation. During that year, both chapters converted almost three times

more new members than the year before. The great Law had begun to rise in Kansai like the brilliant morning sun. The two chapters had a total of forty-two districts and 343 groups. It was one of the largest and strongest of Soka Gakkai organizations, second only to Tokyo.

While the strength of the two chapters was great, their membership in Osaka Prefecture itself amounted to only thirty thousand nine hundred households. This was just a third of the membership in each of the other four areas where the Gakkai was running candidates. The candidate in Osaka Prefecture found himself in a terrible situation even before the campaign started.

True, with the dramatic growth in membership, new districts and groups were constantly being established and many new district leaders, district executives and group leaders were appointed. But all of them had been practicing only a year or two at most. Their lack of leadership experience and inability to give guidance was causing serious problems. If the membership continued to increase at the same rapid pace, there was a severe danger that the organization might turn into nothing but a disorderly crowd.

Josei Toda was the last man to let this grave situation go untended. Capable leaders had to be trained as soon as possible. The people in Kansai tend to be very realistic but easily swayed by popular trends. So Toda would first drive a wedge of pure faith deep in the hearts of the local members, and in a very short time. To achieve his objective he would have to begin immediately, meeting and talking with the members—most of them still young in faith—and infusing them with the basics of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. [...]

With this in mind, Toda had made an important announcement to the top leaders in Kansai during the Gohonzon-enshrining ceremony at their new Headquarters in December. Starting in 1956, he would give class A lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span of the Thus Come One" chapters of the Lotus Sutra for selected members and lectures on the Goshō for all members, as he had been doing in Tokyo. For this purpose, he planned to visit Osaka twice a month. [...]

January 16 and 17 were the dates of Toda's first lectures in Kansai. [...]

On January 16, people began to arrive at the Central Public Hall in Nakanoshima as early as eight o'clock in the morning—more than ten hours before the scheduled opening at half past six that evening. Nearly two hundred had gathered by noon. Some of them had rushed over from Okayama, bringing all three meals with them. Some had stayed overnight in Osaka. Many group leaders brought their members along with them, and quite a few had come with their entire families. Members from Kyoto arrived in several chartered buses.

Although it was still well before opening time, there were so many people in front of the hall that the leaders decided to let them in. In a matter of minutes the building was packed to capacity with six thousand people. About a thousand more—the latecomers—milled around outside but had no intention whatsoever of leaving. A public address system was hurriedly installed so that they could at least hear the lecture.

In midwinter, nights are as chilly in Kansai as they are in Tokyo to the north. Straining their ears, the people outside the hall, their overcoat collars turned up and their mufflers wrapped tightly around their necks, listened earnestly to the lecture to the very end.

When Shin'ichi Yamamoto learned that people had begun gathering even before noon, he was

pleased at the enthusiasm and sincerity the local members showed to greet their president. Together with Seiichiro Haruki, he went to Itami Airport to meet Toda, his first time to see him in several days. Since he had been worried about the president, whom he knew to be overworked he was overjoyed to see Toda looking well. He felt his own fatigue that had been accumulating since the day before quickly take its leave.

At half past six in the evening, Toda began his first lecture on the “Expedient Means” chapter. He cleared his throat, glanced over the assembly and began to speak very frankly. “Here I am in Osaka to give you a lecture. Why? Because I want to rid Osaka of sickness and poverty. I have no other wish. For this wish to be fulfilled, first of all you must practice faith. But if I let it stop there and only *tell* you to do the practice without any explanation, you’ll remain unconvinced. Such is the tendency of people today, and rightly so. On the other hand, if I can show you how truly great Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is, you’ll be convinced enough to exert yourselves in your practice of faith. So, this evening I’ll begin by doing just that.

“Nichiren Buddhism is the most profound and righteous religion in the world. It is the one and only living religion in our time. There are several criteria by which to judge the validity of a religion. One of them is called the five guides. This is a very strict principle. I’ll now show you, in the light of the five guides, how superior the Daishonin’s teaching is to all the other religions, thoughts and philosophies in our age.”

Toda gazed warmly over the tightly packed audience, his thick glasses glinting. Not the slightest sound disturbed the hall, not even a cough. All eyes, burning with enthusiasm, focused upon Toda. Toda thought how easy it felt to give them his lecture tonight.

The five guides is a rather difficult concept. Toda went from one guide to the next, explaining each in terms easily comprehensible to the participants. First, one must correctly understand the teachings. Second, one must correctly understand the people’s capacity. Third, one must clearly recognize the time. Fourth, one must correctly recognize the society and culture. Finally, one must firmly grasp the religions and philosophies that have been propagated up to the present.

“So now you have some idea of what the five guides are,” Toda continued. “When we employ the five guides to closely examine all religions, thoughts and philosophies in this age, we necessarily arrive at the conclusion that Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is the greatest of them all.

“As you continue to embrace the Gohonzon—the object of devotion which the Daishonin left us—for a year, two years, three, five, seven, ten, fifteen years, you’ll find yourself in a state of happiness greater than you ever imagined. You’ll then realize that what I, Toda, said was not false. From this moment on you need not feel anxious about your future. You must not let some foolish doubt cause you to quit your faith halfway or become too lazy to continue. Never slacken your efforts, and continue to do gongyo every morning and evening.” His words were laden with confidence. [...]

A question-and-answer session followed the lecture, during which questions were asked in rapid succession. Coming as they did after Toda’s eye-opening lecture, most of the questions touched the core of Buddhism. Toda’s answers were short and to the point, leaving not the slightest room for doubt. The participants’ eyes grew even wider, and then they lapsed into

contented silence, profoundly moved to realize how truly great was the essence of Buddhism. Before the meeting closed, Shin'ichi rose and addressed the audience, which still reverberated with excitement. He told them Toda's was the most convincing lecture on Buddhism possible in the modern world. Just to be able to listen to such a lecture, he said, was in itself a source of immeasurable blessing. Shin'ichi was more impressed than anyone with that evening's success. As the person with total responsibility for the Kansai campaign, nothing could give him greater joy. [...]

The series of lectures, meetings and guidance sessions vigorously carried out was aimed at increasing the conviction in faith of the members in Kansai, approaching that of the members in Tokyo. The seeking spirit of the Kansai members, though still at step one in faith, was already strong enough to ardently respond to the strenuous efforts of the senior leaders from Tokyo. Ultimately their spirit stemmed from Shin'ichi Yamamoto's seeking spirit toward Josei Toda. Through each contact with him the local members had, without realizing it, absorbed his spirit and firmly implanted it in their own hearts. Shin'ichi's determination had, so to speak, penetrated their being, forming a backbone of belief in each one of them. [...]

Toda had the leaders in charge of each area give detailed reports on their local situation. He paid the keenest attention to whether the unity among the members was growing stronger and how quickly. "No matter how much you may drum on the need for unity, it's quite hard to make people unite since each has a different mind. Suppose here is a bottle of sake..." Toda said, pantomiming the act of setting a large bottle full of wine in the centre of his desk and smiling mischievously.

"When it comes to the matter of drinking this sake, you will instantly agree with each other and join in beautiful unity. That's unity centered on a bottle of liquor. Again, suppose there is a large, delicious-looking cake. You'll immediately and joyfully become unified in one mind: to eat it. But the sake or the cake will be quickly gone and with it your unity. You'll return once again to your individual frames of mind. It's easy to form unity centred on something like liquor or a cake.

The unity we need to fight the forthcoming campaign cannot be achieved with such ease, however. Not only are there so many members with so many different ideas about how to wage this campaign, but they differ widely in their understanding of its significance. How can you unite them in one mind? You may think of using the various election campaign tactics others resort to, but in my opinion all such methods are lacking essence. They cannot provide the vital force we need to ensure our victory."

The leaders remained silent, their faces very serious. They were reflecting to themselves how often they used the phrase "many in body, one in mind," how they'd always cried out about the need for perfect unity. But now they started to wonder why unity was necessary and what the central point of their unity should be. They realized that they were quite unclear about it and could not think of any definite answer. But they must get a definite answer, they thought, for the campaign would soon start. What kind of unity did the president have in mind? Intently they waited for Toda's next words.

"Just think about it. What kind of unity has enabled the Soka Gakkai to become what it is today? It is the unity of faith and nothing else. The unity of many people in one mind. The

human mind is a very changeable entity, easily influenced by circumstances to move in any direction. So it is no easy task to unify different minds into one. You cannot achieve true unity merely by running around barking orders.

“Nothing can be achieved unless we carry out our activities with the realization that the Gohonzon is reverently positioned in the center of any activity, under any and all circumstances. Only when we engage in our activities with that realization can there be unity based on faith. Those in responsible positions must not forget this at any time or under any circumstance. True, liquor or cakes can bring about temporary unity, but when they are consumed that’s the end of their mission.

On the other hand, the Gohonzon eternally entails the mission for kosen-rufu—the mission to dispel all kinds of misery from this earth. If we forget this and focus only on inessential matters, our activities will lose the source of their vital force. You must deeply realize that our unity derives solely from the power of the Gohonzon, not from any technical efficiency in running the organization. Our unity is based on faith from beginning to end, so anyone will be able to begin to practice joyfully once you convince him how truly great and powerful our faith is. It takes time, patience and endurance, however.

“Our campaign this time is nationwide. We may win it or lose it depending on how strong our unity is. At any rate, one characteristic of this campaign is that because of it, our range of unity is expanding on a nationwide scale. All of you hold responsible positions. You must not forget, even for a moment, that our unity is in a totally different dimension from one centered on liquor or cakes or money, and that no unity on earth is stronger, firmer or more beautiful than that centered on the Gohonzon. You’ll keenly realize this when you have actually commenced the campaign. Anyway, have absolute faith in what I say. Then inexhaustible wisdom will well forth without fail so that you’ll be able to take the most appropriate action for any new development.” [...]

When Shin’ichi was given full responsibility for the Kansai area, he instantly knew what Toda expected of him. He did not need to be told by the president what to do, because he sensed it due to the many years of severe training he had received from Toda. Going through one agonizing experience after another, he worked out his own plans without the aid of anyone. His strategy accorded exactly with Toda’s guideline in every particular.

They were one and the same. He no longer needed to try to understand Toda’s guidance; he understood it intuitively. Every word of guidance that Toda gave as the situation changed only made Shin’ichi all the more confident about the way he was carrying out his plans and urged him to redouble his efforts. For Shin’ichi, everything started from his unity with Toda—the unity in the depths of their minds.

The 65th high priest, Nichijun Horigome, a man whom Toda looked up to with the greatest respect, was later to say this: “President Toda carried out the mentor-disciple relationship to its fullest. It was because he was so thorough-going in this respect that he was able to attain his profound understanding and mastery of the way of Buddha.... What should the Soka Gakkai take as the foundation of its faith? I believe it is of primary importance that it should begin with a clear recognition of the mentor-disciple relationship and proceed to develop and deepen its faith on that basis. When the duties inherent in the relationship are fully observed,

then one cannot fail to attain the true way of Buddhism. (...)

“No one was more attentive to Mr. Makiguchi, the first president of the Soka Gakkai, than was his student and disciple Mr. Toda. He was even more obedient to him than if Mr. Makiguchi had been his own father.... The first and second presidents determined in full the attitude toward faith that the members of the Soka Gakkai should hold and the direction in which the organization should move in the future.” [...]

In addition to the study movement, Shin'ichi had taken the initiative in meeting and giving guidance to as many members as time would allow. He had requested that all the leaders in Kansai do the same, and they had promptly complied. He was constantly praying that the guidance, which inspires faith, would flow without interruption to every corner of the organization. Then and only then could his determined heart circulate fresh blood to the members all over Kansai. And, indeed, by January the artery of faith in Kansai had begun to pulse vigorously.

Shin'ichi believed that every person had his own mission, and he instilled the same belief in the members. His starting point was to respect them and give them the best advice he could. He did so, because Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism teaches that based upon the Mystic Law all people are equal and everyone has a mission to accomplish in this world. At the headquarters leaders' meeting on January 31, it was announced that a total of 15,717 households had received their Gohonzon during the month. The strength in Kansai had grown by close to four thousand families in one month.

Shin'ichi Yamamoto fervently prayed that the Kansai members would all awaken to the true faith, develop the capability of ten or even a hundred people and become persons who could act on their own initiative. [...]