

This month we study excerpts from *The New Human Revolution* volume 8 chapter 1 'Securing the foundation'

Embracing his member's heart, Toda vowed to devote himself to spreading the Daishonin's teachings. Both his mentor who died in prison, and he, the disciple who emerged from prison alive, were lions prepared to stake everything for the spread of the Mystic Law.

The way of the lion is the way of mentor and disciple – a life dedicated to truth and justice. [...] Moreover, it is the way of compassion in which one gives oneself completely to championing the cause of the people. The Soka Gakkai is a gathering of lions, an alliance of people who share Josei Toda's spirit and create indestructible happiness and peace. [...]

Since Shin'ichi's inauguration, the Soka Gakkai has clearly grown and advanced by leaps and bounds. This made him more aware that in order to take the next big step, it was necessary to reorganize and secure the foundations of the headquarters and general chapters in each chapters. Shin'ichi also keenly perceived an even more important task – to preserve for all eternity the spirit of his predecessors. [...]

The twenty-fifth Headquarters General Meeting took place on May 3. The weather that morning in Tokyo was the same as on the day of the Headquarters general meeting three years before when Shin'ichi Yamamoto was inaugurated as the third Soka Gakkai president.

Though the participants did not need to assemble at the Nihon University Auditorium in Ryogoku until 9:00 A.M., many began arriving hours earlier. When overseas members from the America General Chapter and Southeast Asia General Chapter entered the auditorium at 7:00 A.M., they heard cheers from the already full venue. The overseas members strode happily and proudly into the auditorium carrying banners: Los Angeles Chapter, Hong Kong Chapter, Bangkok Chapter, Saigon Chapter and Jakarta district. This gave the Japanese members a stronger sense of the International scope of the kosen-rufu movement. In the two-and-a half years since President Yamamoto's first overseas trip, the dream of the worldwide propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism had become a reality before their very eyes. [...]

Michiyo Watari became involved in the socialist movement during her high school days. [...] Realizing there were problems that social reform alone could not resolve, such as incurable disease and family discord, Michiyo felt that the socialist movement had its limitations. Around this time, she learned about the Soka Gakkai from Seiichi Koyama, a young man who delivered milk to her home. His assertion that Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism aimed to achieve both social prosperity and individual happiness inspired her to take faith. [...]

Michiyo became the head of the planning department in the young women's division under the leadership of Young Women's Leader Tokie Tani, and demonstrated enormous ability. She was full of fresh ideas, yet her seniors in the women's and young women's division did not always accept them. Frustrated, she often went to Shin'ichi Yamamoto for guidance. Shin'ichi wanted Michiyo fully to utilize her talents to benefit young women. For this reason, he was sometimes strict with her.

Once, when Michiyo came to him disheartened because her proposal was rejected. Shin'ichi said to her: "Kosen-rufu is a bloodless revolution to create happiness and peace for all people. Even socialist revolutionaries have fought with their lives, enduring one persecution after another without compromising their ideals. Those who become discouraged just because others do not accept their ideas are not qualified to work for kosen-rufu." [...]

On another occasion he said: "If you are always trying to do everything yourself according to how you want it, your members will not grow. It is important to think how to enable each member to joyfully make the most of their potential and to put the spotlight on others, not on yourself. It is also vital to

listen carefully to what others have to say and to be warm and accepting. [...] Always remember that the purpose of faith is to polish our humanity.” [...]

First, Student Division Leader Goro Watari pledged to increase the division’s membership under its crimson and navy flag. Newly appointed Young Women’s Leader Michiyo Watari took the podium next and began speaking energetically of her hopes and goals: “I have been entrusted with the great responsibility of leading the young women on this auspicious occasion commemorating the third anniversary of President Yamamoto’s inauguration. This is a time for fresh advancement. I am determined to muster all my strength and devote myself entirely to kosen-rufu!” She next introduced the first two new mottoes for the young women: “Establish unshakable faith.”

A life without roots is like a floating weed being tossed about on the waves; it is easily swayed by the trends of the times and by personal weaknesses. A person who lives this way will be daunted when faced with harsh trials. Faith, Michiyo stressed, is the very root that grounds us. It begins and ends with chanting daimoku.

She then introduced the second motto: “Lifelong learning.”

There is no growth or progress for those who do not strive to cultivate their minds. A saying goes, “A life without learning is base.” In particular, for those who aim to become leaders of the next generation, study is not only a right but also the greatest duty.

Michiyo further expressed her hope that young women would especially pour their energies into studying the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin – the basic foundation for life – and adopt the Buddhist philosophy of life. [...]

In closing, Ishikawa said: “The Soka Gakkai is the body from which capable individuals are fostered. It is a vast ocean of people, and only by diving and getting actively involved can we develop ourselves into individuals as strong as orca whales. “We the young men, will build a solid organization. [...]

Shin’ichi ended his speech on the subject of human happiness.

“What makes our lives truly shine?” he asked. It is not power or wealth. It is when we, as disciples of Nichiren Daishonin and emissaries of the Buddha, become allies of those who are suffering.

When we devote ourselves to that mission, we can savor a life of ultimate radiance and joy. It is the internal flame of our passion toward that mission that causes our lives to shine eternally with the unfading light of humanity. “Let us therefore continue to carry out faith that flows like water.” [...]

“Mr. Toda was stressing the importance of self improvement for himself as well as other leaders. This is his legacy to us. One cannot be called a true leader unless one continuously strives for self improvement. I feel the same way as Mr. Toda and share the same determination. “Every day I study and self reflect. I challenge myself and strive for personal growth. All of the Soka Gakkai’s affairs are my responsibility. They are my concern. It is because of this firm awareness that I absolutely cannot sit idle by and make careless remarks like an uninvolved critic or spectator. [...]

Emotion filled Shin’ichi Yamamoto’s voice as he concluded his speech at the Senior’s Gathering. “There are young people who are old and older people who are young. The key to staying young is to possess a flexible mind that constantly strives for self improvement. At the same time, how we live our final years determines our ultimate happiness in life. No matter how wonderful and happy our lives may have been in the past, nothing could be more tragic than ending up miserable, bitter and full of complaint. “Happiness is not a matter of wealth nor is it determined by social status or fame. Rather, our happiness is determined by whether we live always with a sense of purpose and mission, regardless of age. “That each of you, our seniors in life, practice faith wholeheartedly and live each day in high spirits, with tremendous energy and hope, is the greatest proof of the validity of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. I close my remarks today with sincere prayers for your continued health and longevity.” [...]

“Also, offering guidance, encouraging and inspiring others to stand up in faith do not have to happen only at meetings- they can take place in the public bath, for example, or over dinner.” Shin’ichi then turned to Goro Watari, the new Hyogo Headquarters chief, and said: “Watari, your center of activities will move from Kyoto to Hyogo. Please become friends with the members there. You’re young, so I hope you will always be careful to listen to and respect the opinions of your elders. I’m sure it will be easier to surround yourself with people of your own generation and work more closely with them, but that will only upset the balance of the organization, and you’ll end up alienated from everyone.

“At the same time, older leaders should surround themselves with youth and value their opinions. The Soka Gakkai’s membership is made up of young and old alike. The true power of the Soka Gakkai can only be revealed when each member uses his or her full potential and all work together in harmony and unity.” On the way back from the bath, Shin’ichi and the others ate ice cream and talked about the future prospects for kosen-ruf. Shin’ichi wanted to eliminate formalism from the Soka Gakkai as much as possible. He was completely natural at all times, and this had always been the way he lived [...]

“Nichiren Daishonin writes, ‘Buddhism primarily concerns itself with victory or defeat’ (WND, 835) This is because kosen-rufu is a struggle against the devil king of the sixth heaven, the negative function that destroys life. In fact, human existence is itself a struggle. Realizing genuine happiness begins with challenging and winning over our own cowardice and laziness. Human revolution means to overcome the negative aspects of the self, and our Soka Gakkai activities are the arena in which we can do so.

“I am not really concerned with the short-term results of our propagation activities; what matters most is that each of you exerts yourself wholeheartedly in faith, enjoys great benefit and an enriched life, and attain a boundless state of life overflowing with joy. I hope you will always remember that this is the reason we share the Daishonin’s Buddhism with others and why we engage in Soka Gakkai activities. [...] Just as a flower blossoms after enduring the bitter cold of the winter, a dream can be realized only if one is willing to endure the accompanying trials and put forth the necessary effort.” [...]

The next day, June 21, he headed for the island Amami Oshima. His main goal on his trip to Kyushu was to encourage the members living in the Amami group of Islands.

Shin’ichi was very concerned for his fellow members striving to practice Buddhism in this isolated archipelago. Not only were their means of transportation limited, but some of the islands were without medical care or even electricity. Their livelihoods were also at the mercy of the weather; typhoons or other storms could cut them off from life’s essentials. Long spells of dry heat would leave many of the Islands without drinking water. Old customs and traditions were strongly rooted there so trying to spread Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism under these circumstances proved quite a challenge. [...]

The journey to Amami Oshima took about 5 or 6 hours. The local members remarked that the sea was very calm but the leaders from Tokyo who had accompanied Shin’ichi were unaccustomed to ocean travel, and to them the waters seemed rough and choppy. Soon after they left the harbor, all but Shin’ichi were seasick. Their faces pale, even sat slumped against the back of their seats. [...]

After arriving at the center and chanting daimoku three times, the leaders traveling with Shin’ichi stretched out their legs and made themselves comfortable. The journey had worn them out.

General Director Koichi Harayama muttered, “Amami is so far! And the rocking of the ship really got to me.” Hearing this, Shin’ichi quickly remarked: “We finally made it to Amami. Having come this far, I’m determined to really accomplish something. While we’re here, let’s put our five years worth of effort to secure the development of our movement in Amami!” [...]

Looking at each of his companions, Shin’ichi continued: “I propose that we establish a general chapter here in the Amami Islands. “Amami is a place with a painful past. It has suffered various kinds of cruel oppression. [...] To transform that bitter karma, to make Amami strong and independent, I want to

establish a general chapter here, even though the membership is still quite small. I have reached to that conclusion after long, hard consideration. Let's talk about ideas for the organization and leadership of the general chapter." [...]

Takashi Nogawa ran a general store on Amami Oshima. An earnest looking man in his late thirties, he was straight forward and honest. [...] Upon returning home after serving in the army during the war, his life on Amami Oshima under U.S. military rule was very difficult, and he lived day after day in desperate poverty. Eventually he opened the general store and married, but just as business seemed to be taking off, he contracted tuberculosis. Both of his parents had died when he was a child, and his sister died at sixteen. Sensing that his entire family was fated to die young, Nogawa began to fear his own demise. [...] It was around this time that he first heard about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. [...] Day by day, he began to feel better, and when he had an X-ray taken about a year later, not a trace of shadow was found on his lungs. The doctor was astonished. This experience gave Nogawa tremendous confidence in his faith, and began to put even more energy into Soka Gakkai activities. He experienced the power of Buddhist practice to change karma. [...]

A chapter leader in those early days of the Soka Gakkai's activities in the Amami Islands would have to cut back on working hours to visit all the members. Nogawa knew this and was therefore hesitant to accept the position of head of Amami Oshima chapter. His wife Yoshimi was also well aware of the weight of responsibility that came with the post. [...] But she also understood that to transform the tragic karma of the Amami Islands and bring happiness to all of the people there, someone had to take on that task, and so she made up her mind. "We can do it. I'll take care of the store!" she told her husband. These words enabled Mr. Nogawa to make his decision. [...] After his appointment, Nogawa gave himself wholeheartedly to helping the members practice and to spreading the Daishonin's teachings throughout the Amami archipelago. It turned out to be just as challenging as he anticipated - in fact, even more so. Visiting the islands, often kept Nogawa away from home for a week or two at a time. [...] While travelling late one night, he was suddenly overcome with fatigue. He stopped his bike and lay down by the roadside. He awoke to the feel of something on his stomach. He opened his eyes and gulped. It was a habu, a poisonous snake native to the southern Japanese islands. [...] The snake slowly made its way across Nogawa's abdomen and slithered away. The whole incident has lasted only about ten seconds, but it seemed like hours. There was always a risk of encountering these snakes on these islands of Amami Oshima and Tokushima. [...]

The more he traveled from island to island and the harder he exerted himself, the more strain it put on his family budget. His wife Yoshimi scrimped and saved, barely making ends meet. [...] She knew her husband was working for the happiness of the people of the Amami Islands. And she was determined to at least take care of the household in his absence. That was her personal vow. [...]

Haru Fujisawa, who was to be appointed Amami Oshima General Chapter women's division leader, was a wise, kindhearted woman in her fifties. [...] When Amami Oshima Chapter was founded, she was appointed the chapter women's division leader. After being appointed as the chapter women's leader, Haru Fujisawa traveled from island to island igniting the flame of the Mystic Law. Her journeys did not always go smoothly. If a storm hit, the beautiful blue sea would turn into a swarm of angry waves, and her way would be blocked. She once found herself stranded offshore for seven hours, her boat unable to dock due to the high swells. [...] On the islands, she often spent two or three hours each night walking from place to place visiting members but this exposed her to the danger of being bitten by the poisonous habu snake. Sometimes people even threw salt¹ at her and her fellow

1 In Japan, it was traditionally believed that salt had purifying qualities. It was thrown as a form of protection against impurity.

members who came to talk about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Watching the salt scatter around her like falling snow, Haru continually vowed to herself: "I will not give up! Whatever happens, I will spread the Daishonin's Buddhism throughout the Islands faster than any other part of Japan and make this the happiest place in the entire country!"

Takashi Nogawa, the Amami Oshima Chapter leader, shared this conviction with Haru, as did all the Amami members. Folk religion was still deeply rooted in the Amami Islands, and people worshipped the female priests who conducted local shaman rituals as well as those believed to be faith healers who could communicate with and speak for the gods. Anyone who opposed such traditions was thought to be cursed. Amid these circumstances, the Soka Gakkai members proudly strove to teach people about Buddhism. [...]

The sun rose high above the vast ocean. The long awaited day of a new beginning had dawned. [...]

"If there is a sun shining in our hearts," thought Shin'ichi, "we can dispel all inner darkness and without fail arrive at a glorious morning of victory. If we want to transform the community in which we live, we must ask ourselves: Does our heart burn with fighting spirit and are we truly committed to spreading the Daishonin's teachings?" [...]

The eagerly anticipated completion ceremony for the Amami Oshima Community Center began just before 10 A.M. He hoped that the members of the Amami Islands would enjoy wonderful benefit from their practice. "The Gohonzon is a mandala, which means 'cluster of blessings' and 'perfectly endowed'", he said. "In other words, it contains the benefits of all Buddhas and all teachings or laws without exceptions. The strength of our faith and the strength of our practice are what draw forth the power of the Buddha and the Law from the Gohonzon. At the same time, our strong faith and practice manifest themselves as the powers of the Buddha and the Law."

Shin'ichi spoke next of the importance of chanting daimoku, and finished by saying: "This community center is a castle of the Law for all of you to use freely for the spreading the Daishonin's teachings. I hope that your unity and courage will give rise to a great surge of propagation that will flow from this castle, which is the southernmost of our community centers in Japan. I am counting on you to achieve kosen-rufu here in the Amami Islands in my place." [...]

In the time between two meetings, Shin'ichi and his party took the opportunity to see Naze City with the newly appointed Amami Oshima Chapter General Chapter leaders. [...] As they looked out at the water, Shin'ichi asked Nogawa, "What is the biggest problem facing the people of the Islands?" "Habu snakes, he replied. [...] But some areas on the islands have no doctors, in which case these bites can be fatal. [...] Shin'ichi then asked Takashi Nogawa: "Are there any other problems besides habu snakes?" "Yes" replied Nogawa. "Typhoons. So many typhoons hit Amami that it is called Typhoon Alley. We suffer enormous damage every year."

"This is also an area where the government should think of various ways to assure the public's safety and security," Shin'ichi said. But the fundamental solution to these problems lies in the members' determined prayers. Buddhism teaches that the mind encompasses the entire universe. [...]

This is the teaching of the oneness of life and its environment, and the principle of a single life moment possessing three thousand realms. This means that if more and more people start chanting with determined prayer, even the most difficult of situations will change. "Everything starts with a strong determination. Such determination may inspire us to research ways of protecting the home or find out what crops are most likely to survive the typhoon, for example. This determination can also move the government. Our duty, our mission is to make the place we live a Land of Eternally Tranquil Light, a realm of happiness and peace. [...]

Shin'ichi's high spirits made it impossible for the members to know just how tired he was and how much he was exerting himself. He lived by the passage in the "Twenty-six Admonitions of Nikko":

“Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability without begrudging your life” (gz, 1618) [...] Spiritual succession does not take place in the conceptual realm. It happens only through action and behavior. [...]

The formation of many new headquarters and general chapters was steadily securing the Soka Gakkai’s organizational foundation, but Shin’ichi felt deeply that securing the spiritual foundation would breath real life into the organization. [...] As the leader of the race for kosen-rufu, Shin’ichi ranahead alone at full speed. He believed that scores of runners, true friends in faith, would definitely follow in succession.