

**The New Human Revolution, Volume 5, Chapter 4**  
**Lion**  
**BY HO GOKU – ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA**

Translation of parts 25–29 of the ‘Lion’ chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

It was very late at night, but Toda continued speaking as if unaware of the passage of time: “Of the Venerable Maudgalyayana, one of Shakyamuni’s disciples, Nichiren Daishonin writes: ‘Since he himself had not yet attained Buddhahood, it was very difficult for him to relieve the sufferings of his parents. And how much more difficult would it have been for him to do so for anyone else!’ (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 170). He is emphasizing that attaining Buddhahood ourselves — our personal human revolution — is the key to leading our parents and others to happiness and to creating a more humane society.

“This means that any method of social development arising from Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism will not be a destructive or a radical revolution. Instead, it will be a peaceful and gradual process that begins with dialogue, a process by which the individual strives for self-perfection through human revolution. This is clear when we look at the Daishonin’s own struggles. His life was always dedicated to the earnest life-to-life dialogue called *shakubuku* — the spiritual and intellectual struggle to awaken other human beings.

“But so-called Nichirenists of later times distorted the Daishonin’s teachings, interpreting them in a nationalist fashion. They abandoned the idea of spiritual struggle and instead engaged in invasions, coups and terrorist activities.

“For example, one follower of Chigaku Tanaka was Kanji Ishiwara,<sup>1</sup> who, as operations officer of Japan’s Guandong Army in Manchuria, initiated the Manchurian Incident, which ignited the Japanese invasion of Asia. Another Nichirenist was Nissho Inoue,<sup>2</sup> founder of the League of Blood, a terrorist group whose slogan was ‘one person, one death,’ and mastermind behind the assassinations of top politician and former Finance Minister Junnosuke Inoue and prominent business leader Takuma Dan in 1932. Yet another was Ikki Kita,<sup>3</sup> who strongly influenced the young officers whose attempted coup d’état in 1936 is known as the Feb. 26 Incident.

“Their actions represented a fundamental perversion of the Buddhist spirit. They were all destroyers and debasers of the loftiest truth. They were truly examples of ‘destroying what is exalted and dragging it down among the base’ (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 68). They perverted the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, twisted it, and tried to fit its teachings into their narrow and prejudiced way of thinking. Not a single one of them ever focused on the needs of the people, tried to speak to them or engage them in dialogue, or attempted to spread the true teaching and accomplish kosen-rufu. They had all forgotten the most basic challenge: how to accomplish an inner reformation of each individual.

“Their actions contributed immeasurably to distorting the Daishonin’s Buddhism and creating a mistaken impression about it among society at large. Even today, the name *Nichiren* conjures images of ultranationalistic dogma in many people’s minds.

“At the time when these Nichirenists were pursuing their extremist platform, Mr. Makiguchi was proclaiming and practicing the Daishonin’s true spirit and teachings. He worked among the people, holding many discussion meetings and devoting his energies to solving the problems that were actually making people suffer. That is the proud and brilliant history of the Gakkai.”

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**Shin'ichi** Yamamoto listened intently to Josei Toda's account, deeply absorbing everything. Toda's delivery gradually became more intense: "The reason that we are now trying to achieve the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism is that government, economics and education have not been contributing to human happiness as they should.

"In the past, Japan advanced with the slogan 'Enrich the Country and Strengthen the Military' and joined the ranks of the world's powerful nations. But though the state became powerful, how did this affect the lives of the people? The wealth of ordinary citizens did not increase. Rather, only a certain sector of the population, the members of the powerful industrial and financial cliques known as *zaibatsu*, really benefited. Then Japan plunged into its disastrous war. In other words, neither government nor big business protected or brought prosperity to the Japanese people as they should have; instead, they brought them great misfortune and unhappiness.

"And what about science? It is certainly true that science has made remarkable progress, but that progress has also resulted in the hydrogen bomb, which threatens the very existence of humankind and has struck fear in people's hearts.

"Then let's look at education. Educational opportunities for the general populace in Japan have increased rapidly since the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Since the war, secondary education has become compulsory and the number of universities has grown dramatically. But has that really contributed to people's happiness? Though the number of university students has increased, so has the number of people who are lacking in character, wisdom and knowledge. The pursuit of academic credentials has become an end in itself.

"And look at the international situation. Many smaller nations suffer in the shadow of the prosperity enjoyed by the major powers, their interests sacrificed to those of their stronger counterparts. Huge gaps have opened between nations in the areas of economic development and education. The sad truth is that while some nations prosper, they often do so at the expense of other nations, and that even if a nation or society may enjoy affluence, the majority of its citizens often lead impoverished lives.

"This, Shin'ichi, is the problem: There is no solid philosophy to lead the way in government, economics, science and education, no philosophy of life to show people the right path to pursue. The Daishonin espoused the principle of the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism to correct this situation, to transform this unhappy state of affairs.

"In my opinion, the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism in essence envisions all the nations of the world prospering; it means that the prosperity of each society and the happiness of each individual in that society are in complete accord. Government, economics, science and education must all be returned to the people and utilized as means to contribute to and support the pursuit of human happiness. This is the Soka Gakkai's mission and the meaning of Buddhist social activism.

"And this, Shin'ichi, will inevitably become a task that you will have to devote your energies to throughout the rest of your life."

**Interpreting** the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism to mean a perfect accord between social prosperity and personal happiness, Josei Toda could not stand by silently and watch the unfolding turmoil of Japanese politics, a sphere that had such important and direct influence on people's happiness. He encouraged several of his disciples, individuals he had personally taught and fostered, to run in local assembly elections and later in the national elections for the House of Councilors (Upper House).

Shin'ichi Yamamoto inherited this spirit of Toda's to help actualize a government dedicated to the people's happiness, and continued to send candidates into the political arena after Toda's death.

After Shin'ichi became president of the Soka Gakkai on May 3, 1960, an enormously powerful momentum of propagation ensued, and great strides were made toward the achievement of kosen-rufu. Because of this, members began to ask with increasing frequency what form the high sanctuary of true Buddhism should take, and it became an issue that Shin'ichi, having inherited complete responsibility for every aspect of the movement from Toda, could not avoid addressing.

Nichiren Shoshu continued to think of kosen-rufu in terms of establishing a national high sanctuary. The Gakkai had respected the priesthood's opinion in this regard, but Shin'ichi was forced to ponder seriously whether this was in fact Nichiren Daishonin's true intent. The phrase "an imperial decree and a shogunal directive" from the Daishonin's work "On the Three Great Secret Laws" was considered by some to justify the establishment of a national high sanctuary. But did it really?

Certainly, the Mahayana ordination platform that Saicho (Great Teacher Dengyo) had sought to have erected at Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei during the Heian period (794–1185) had been built by imperial decree. But in those days, all priests in Japan had to be recognized by the government, and in a sense functioned as public officials. Privately ordained priests were actually illegal. The sanctuaries or ordination platforms where these official priests were ordained naturally fell under the jurisdiction of the state, and an imperial edict would, therefore, have been essential for the construction of any such facility.

During the Daishonin's life, the rule of the imperial court had become largely ceremonial; though the emperor retained a degree of authority, actual government was administered by the military rulers — the shogunate — in Kamakura. The distinction between official government priests and privately ordained priests had also disappeared and ordination itself was no longer widely practiced. Nevertheless, the building of a new sanctuary for ordination would have required both a decree from the emperor and a directive from the shogunate as dictated by tradition.

It was also clear that in those days, the widespread propagation of the True Law in Japan could only have been achieved if the nation's leaders — the emperor and the military rulers — embraced that teaching. This was another reason why an imperial decree and a shogunal directive would have been necessary to build a high sanctuary.

**D**ay and night, even while on the road during his guidance trips, Shin'ichi Yamamoto devoted time to studying the Goshu and researching historical sources and other documents, constantly pondering the subject of the high sanctuary. The Kamakura period was very different from the present in many respects. Freedom of religion was now guaranteed to all, and building a high sanctuary would not require any imperial decree or shogunal directive.

In an age of democracy, when sovereignty rested with each citizen, kosen-rufu would be simply the outcome of people freely deciding to embrace Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. In light of this, the contemporary equivalent of "an imperial decree and a shogunal directive" was the will of the people. Moreover, as long as the people complied with all the legal formalities, filing any necessary construction permits and other paperwork, there was nothing to stop them from just going ahead and building the high sanctuary.

It was inappropriate, then, to conclude from the phrase "an imperial decree and a shogunal directive" that the Daishonin was implying a national high sanctuary. But was

there anything in the Daishonin's spirit to indicate that the high sanctuary should be a national institution?

When the Daishonin returned from exile on Sado Island, the Kamakura shogunate offered him land and a temple if he would agree to pray for the safety of the nation — but the Daishonin firmly refused. His decision reflected not only his rejection of support from those who slandered the True Law but also his determination to remain independent as a Buddhist leader, not subservient to the state.

He even referred to the highest figures of the military government as “the rulers of this little island country” (MW-1, 176), and further declared: “Since I have been born in the ruler's domain, I must follow him in my actions. But I need not follow him in the beliefs of my heart” (MW-3, 171). In other words, though we must obey the laws of the ruler of the land in which we are born, we remain free to follow the dictates of our conscience. The Daishonin also spoke of spreading the Law widely throughout Jambudvīpa — that is, the entire world.

In light of these facts, any idea of a national religion or a national high sanctuary was in complete contradiction to the Daishonin's spirit. Making Nichiren Shoshu the national religion of Japan or building a high sanctuary as a national, government-sponsored institution would only serve to make this great Buddhism the property of a single country. This would be directly counter to the spirit of the Daishonin, who taught the Law for the sake of all human beings.

At any rate, Shin'ichi concluded that the whole concept of a national high sanctuary, which Nichiren Shoshu had adopted from the late Meiji Era (1868–1912) onward, should be corrected. To fail to do so would be to distort the Daishonin's Buddhism and invite misunderstanding from society at large.

**O**n several occasions, including during their guidance trip to Asia the previous year, 1961, Shin'ichi Yamamoto had told High Priest Nittatsu that he thought the idea of a national high sanctuary was at variance with Nichiren Daishonin's spirit. Eventually, High Priest Nittatsu came to agree completely with Shin'ichi's opinion and, in later years, publicly declared that the concept of a national high sanctuary was erroneous, making the following statement:

In the past, it is true, we in Nichiren Shoshu have referred to the high sanctuary to be completed at the time of kosen-rufu as a national high sanctuary. But Nichiren Daishonin spoke of ‘the establishment of the supreme object of worship on the earth’ (MW-1, 81) for the salvation of all the world's people. Nowhere did he speak of making his Buddhism the national religion of Japan. Given this fact that the Daishonin's Buddhism is not a state religion, any talk of a *national high sanctuary* is meaningless; it is an inappropriate term....

Today, the term *national high sanctuary* invites public suspicion and, in fact, is a hindrance to propagation. For these reasons, we will no longer use this term in our school.

The Soka Gakkai has also used the term *national high sanctuary*, but as a gathering of lay believers of Nichiren Shoshu, this was only because Nichiren Shoshu did so. I do not think it appropriate for people today to criticize the Soka Gakkai for having used the word *national* in describing the high sanctuary in the past.<sup>4</sup>

With the launching of the Komei Political Federation, Shin'ichi felt that the Soka Gakkai had now left the harbor and was sailing out into the open sea on its journey to bring together individual happiness and social prosperity as indicated by the concept of the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism. The established political parties

would inevitably feel threatened by what they perceived as the Gakkai's increased emphasis on political activism, and would vigorously rise up against it.

Shin'ichi had a premonition of the angry onslaught that would batter the Gakkai in the future. But he also knew that the only way to truly contribute to the happiness of the people and restore government to the people's control was to advance bravely and unflinchingly toward that brewing tempest. This was the Soka Gakkai's noble mission, a mission that would bring about a new age of triumph for ordinary people. It was the path chosen by those of lion-like courage who were ready to protect and defend the people.

*(To be continued)*

1. Kanji Ishiwara (1889–1949): army officer and writer who was a member of Chigaku Tanaka's National Pillar Society.
2. Nissho Inoue (1886–1967): founder of the Ketsumeidan (League of Blood).
3. Ikki Kita (1883–1937): leading ultranationalist thinker who called for a reconstruction of Japan through a military coup to eliminate the existing leadership structure. Was later executed for his involvement in the Feb. 26 Incident.
4. From a special lecture at the 33rd Soka Gakkai Headquarters General Meeting held on May 3, 1970.

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