

**The New Human Revolution, Volume 6, Chapter 3**  
**Acceleration**  
**BY HO GOKU – ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA**

Translation of parts 18–23 of the ‘Acceleration’ 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.

**Shin’ichi** Yamamoto continued in a strict tone: “There are two kinds of leaders — those who are committed to working tirelessly for the members and those who seek only to exploit them for their personal advantage. The difference may not be apparent at a glance, but it becomes glaringly so as time goes by. Leaders of the latter type always cause problems of one sort or another for members in their area. They are disliked and invariably wind up leaving the organization of their own accord. It’s a no-win situation for everyone concerned. Leaders have to cast aside all selfishness and vanity, becoming strongly determined to devote themselves fully to the members. This is the true, correct way to practice Buddhism.

“In any event, you have to decide to work for your fellow members and do everything in your power to enable them all to fully reveal their potential. This is what it means to be a genuine leader.”

The kosen-rufu movement in Shikoku had been progressing rather slowly, lagging behind neighboring regions such as Kyushu and Chugoku. If kosen-rufu were to develop in Shikoku, it was essential that the core leaders grow in capability.

“Your first task in Shikoku is to unite,” Shin’ichi said in closing. “Just like a table or chair is supported by four legs, the members in all four of Shikoku’s prefectures should firmly unite and advance together toward a common goal. I will come to Shikoku again soon. Let’s pool our strength and usher in a new era for Shikoku!”

Shin’ichi worked seriously to strengthen the Shikoku organization so that it would develop into a solid base for kosen-rufu.

The fifth memorial service for Josei Toda [marking the fourth anniversary of his death] and the long-awaited ground-breaking ceremony for the Grand Reception Hall were held at the head temple Taiseki-ji on April 2. The sky was slightly overcast, but the cherry trees lining the pathways of the temple grounds had started to bloom. It was as if they wished to pay tribute to Toda.

A solemn memorial service got under way at the Grand Lecture Hall at 1:00 p.m. After everyone offered incense and several divisional representatives shared recollections of Toda, Shin’ichi addressed the gathering. His thoughts were filled with the heroic image of his mentor as he spoke:

“President Toda was a great teacher of propagation. First of all, I wish to report to him what we have achieved: President Toda, our membership at the time of your death, on April 2, 1958, was 817,000 households. Today, four years later, we have achieved a membership of 2,542,000 households through the activities of our members, who have arisen with a noble, selfless dedication to the Law, illuminated by the brilliant benefit of the Gohonzon.”

Shin’ichi’s clear voice rang powerfully through the hall.

**Shin’ichi** continued his report to his late mentor: “Through the momentous efforts of the disciples you fostered, our ranks have grown by 1,725,000 precious member households.

This, I state with utmost humility and joy, speaks volumes to the greatness of your leadership.

“Day and night, with every fiber of our beings, we are earnestly pursuing activities toward achieving the goal of kosen-rufu in accord with Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings. These noble efforts are free of self-interest, calculation or desire for fame and reputation. They are inspired solely by a fervent prayer for peace and the happiness of people in all strata of society — young and old, rich and poor — in Japan and throughout the world.

“At present, however, the Soka Gakkai is under fire from all sides. We are being showered with malicious criticism and abuse. But because the Gosho teaches that ‘when great evil occurs, great good will follow’ (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 161), I am convinced that these events are a happy omen.

“As part of our commitment to build a peaceful, prosperous society based on Buddhist principles, we will be supporting a number of candidates — our members who have formed the Clean Government [Komei] Political Federation — in this summer’s House of Councilors elections.

“It is certain that the more boldly we advance to create a new society guided by Buddhist ideals, the more rancorous the criticism and abuse will become. But I vow to continue striding ahead courageously on the path to kosen-rufu, so that we may realize the happy and peaceful world for which you long.”

In closing, Shin’ichi appealed: “Our mentor dedicated his life to human happiness and world peace. As his disciples, it is our mission to convey his spirit not only to our fellow Japanese but to all the world. Let us each proudly walk the path of a disciple and live the limited span of our lives as valuably, as meaningfully as possible, so as not to have a single regret.”

Shin’ichi’s words were greeted with resounding applause.

What pleased him most was attending this fifth memorial for President Toda with a sense of accomplishment as a disciple, proud that he was steadily fulfilling each of the vows he had made to his mentor. He imagined his mentor’s beloved face before him smiling broadly in approval.

After Shin’ichi’s address and a short speech of thanks by Toda’s son, Kyoichi, the memorial service ended with everyone joining in a chorus of “Song of Comrades.”

**A**fter the service, Shin’ichi visited his mentor’s grave. And at 3:50 p.m., he attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the Grand Reception Hall on the same site where the previous Reception Hall had stood. Shin’ichi had, during his inauguration as Soka Gakkai president at the 22nd Headquarters General Meeting on May 3, 1960, pledged to undertake this project and complete it some time before President Toda’s seventh memorial in 1964 [the sixth anniversary of Toda’s death].

The construction of the Grand Reception Hall, an edifice to be dedicated to the prayer to realize kosen-rufu, had been one of President Toda’s long-cherished dreams. He had instructed Shin’ichi to incorporate the finest materials from around the world in building it, including Canadian cedar, Taiwanese cypress and Italian marble.

It had also been decided that stones from around the world, symbolizing the global spread of the Daishonin’s teachings, would be sealed in the building’s concrete foundation. Shin’ichi had already begun to collect stones for that purpose from the countries he had visited in North and South America, Southeast Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

Cherishing their mission for kosen-rufu, Soka Gakkai members gladly lent their full support to the project, pouring in sincere donations toward its construction. Shin’ichi knew that many of the members, far from being financially well off, had to cut back on their

daily expenses to make a donation. The contributions from the members, regardless of their positions in the organization, were an expression of their strong desire to support the development of kosen-rufu and their immensely noble seeking spirit toward Buddhism.

Throughout the ceremony, Shin'ichi thought of the sincerity of these earnest, devoted members and offered heartfelt prayers of deep appreciation. After a ceremonial gongyo service, the ground-breaking took place, followed by speeches, including a progress report by Soka Gakkai General Director Koichi Harayama.

Rising to speak, Shin'ichi said, "I firmly believe that the construction of this Grand Reception Hall represents a light of hope, a new dawn and a source of joy for Japan and the entire world." It was Shin'ichi's conviction that the construction of a hall dedicated to prayer for kosen-rufu signaled a momentous step toward the goal of world peace and happiness for all humanity.

Many members wept with joy when they read the reports of the groundbreaking for the Grand Reception Hall in the *Seikyo Shimbun*. This project, made possible by their contributions, was at long last taking shape. When they thought how their efforts would beautify the head temple and tremendously boost the development of their movement to spread the Daishonin's teachings, they were elated and excited.

The walls of discussion meeting venues across the country were adorned with sketches of the planned structure clipped from the *Seikyo Graphic* and other Gakkai journals, or enlarged renderings drawn by some artistic hand. The subject of the groundbreaking ceremony was on everyone's lips.

**At** discussion meetings across the country, people rejoiced and celebrated at the news of the Grand Reception Hall groundbreaking. Everyone was very proud. One member declared how excited and moved she was that her small contribution would go toward a tatami mat or part of one of the structure's concrete pillars. Another said that those critics who labeled the Gakkai as a gathering of the sick and poor should take a look at the magnificent hall being built through the members' donations. All resolved to set in motion a new wave of propagation and create a dynamic rhythm of growth within the organization in tandem with the building's progress.

Many members were of very humble means. But they were filled with pride to be contributing to kosen-rufu. The Grand Reception Hall was truly a crystallization of their beautiful, unalloyed sincerity, a symbol of the hope and joy they felt in working to create an enlightened realm of lasting peace and happiness.

No one at the time could have imagined that, some 30 years later, a high priest named Nikken would summarily dismiss Shin'ichi — the very person who had contributed so greatly to the prosperity of the head temple — from his position as chief lay representative of Nichiren Shoshu. Nor would any have guessed that the same high priest would later issue a notice excommunicating the Soka Gakkai and order the Grand Reception Hall demolished. In his all-consuming jealousy and desire to assert absolute authority over believers, Nikken would not only betray the members' sincerity, but launch a campaign to destroy the Soka Gakkai, an organization working to realize the Buddha's will and intent.

Whereas his actions would constitute an ineradicable offense in light of the teachings of Buddhism, the pioneer members of the Soka Gakkai, who generously donated toward the construction of the Grand Reception Hall out of the wish to contribute to kosen-rufu, had made a cause that would elicit the eternal praise of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. The members' unstinting support and commitment to widely disseminate the philosophy and ideals of Buddhism infused their lives with immeasurable good fortune, the brilliance of which could never be destroyed.

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Shin'ichi devoted most of his time during the first half of April to offering guidance to members in Tokyo and the surrounding areas. On April 5, he attended a meeting with district leaders of Saitama General Chapter at the Saitama Community Center, lecturing on the Gosho "Reply to Lord Toki" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 962). On the 14th, he flew to the northern island of Hokkaido, where spring had yet to arrive. Shin'ichi's schedule there included attending a Hokkaido General Chapter Leaders Meeting on the 15th and then lecturing on the Gosho to a gathering of district leaders.

Toward nightfall on the 14th, the day of his arrival in Hokkaido, he planted a cherry tree in the garden of the Hokkaido Headquarters in memory of the late Hokkaido young women's division chief Haruko Arashiyama. He was fulfilling a promise he had made to the young women's division members at Arashiyama's funeral on Jan. 13.

**A**round 30 or 40 people — Soka Gakkai directors, Hokkaido leaders and young women's division representatives — joined Shin'ichi for the tree-planting. A beautiful sunset began to suffuse the sky.

With Shin'ichi presiding, the vice general directors, directors and young women's division leaders took turns shoveling dirt over the roots of a cherry tree sapling that was a little more than 10 feet in height. In time, this tree would blossom each year, bringing people joy and reviving fond memories of Arashiyama.

When the tree-planting was finished, Shin'ichi addressed the group: "Let's cherish and nurture this cherry tree as if it were Ms. Arashiyama herself. I am sure it will grow into a great, splendid tree. Ms. Arashiyama will always be with us. Each year at cherry blossom time, I hope you will observe how her tree has grown and challenge yourselves to grow in like manner."

Time often dims the memory of the deceased in the hearts of the living. That is why Shin'ichi wanted to honor and perpetuate the achievements of this brave member who had devoted her life to spreading the Daishonin's teachings. He also hoped the tree-planting would help the young women's division members in Hokkaido rise above their grief over her death and make that day a starting point toward a bright, promising future.

At a meeting that evening of chapter chiefs from throughout Hokkaido, Shin'ichi gave guidance based on the Gosho "On the Four Stages of Faith and the Five Stages of Practice" (MW-6, 211).

April 15, the day of the Hokkaido General Chapter Leaders Meeting, dawned fine and clear. Members from all parts of Hokkaido gathered in Sapporo's Nakajima Sports Center where the meeting got under way at 10:00 a.m.

Shin'ichi praised the Hokkaido members' great achievements and, citing the Gosho, addressed the slander and abuse being leveled at the Soka Gakkai, highlighting how spurious it was.

"The other day," Shin'ichi said, "General Director Harayama met with a certain well-known individual who asked, 'Don't Soka Gakkai members go around burning family Buddhist altars and stealing condolence money intended for bereaved families?' Harayama answered: 'Of course not! That's a completely distorted picture of our organization. We've never once told our members to burn people's Buddhist altars — nor have our members ever stolen condolence money.' Upon hearing this, the individual seemed extremely surprised and apologized for his misunderstanding.

"Just because a person is a respected leader in society does not mean that his or her words will reflect a correct perception of the Gakkai. And there are many cases, as we have seen, where individuals or groups who fear the Gakkai's growth deliberately spread lies about us."

**Shin'ichi** continued: “To undermine our credibility and hinder our progress, they spread baseless and malicious rumors, trying to convince an unsuspecting public that their assertions are true. Once they have planted a negative perception of the Gakkai in people’s minds, they strive to manipulate public opinion, to turn it against our organization. This is one form that persecution takes in the present age.

“Our kosen-rufu activities, therefore, start with changing people’s misunderstandings and prejudices about the Gakkai that stem from such erroneous preconceptions and then acquainting them with the real Soka Gakkai and the true greatness of Buddhism. In other words, working to overcome misunderstandings and prejudices is a large part of our Buddhist practice in the Latter Day of the Law. Actively discussing and conveying the truth to others constitute the practice of *shakubuku*.”

It is not easy to overturn an image or accepted belief once it has taken root. But a new, better age can only be brought about by breaking down such misconceptions and opening people’s eyes to the truth.

Last, Shin'ichi explained why the Gakkai had formed the Clean Government Political Federation and was fielding candidates to run for public office. “There has been some public criticism as to why a religious organization like the Gakkai is backing candidates for government office on the local and national level,” he said. “Today, I want to take this opportunity to clarify this.

“As Buddhists, we uphold the teachings of Buddhism. But we are also citizens, of Japan and our local communities, who have a duty to participate in government and take responsibility for our country’s direction. We would be selfish and neglectful of our civic duty if we showed no interest in politics and instead concerned ourselves only with our personal happiness and benefit.

“Today’s government turns its back on the weak and disadvantaged in our society and does nothing to aid the people in a true sense. This is what has prompted us to support for public office members committed to working for the people’s happiness and welfare based on the compassionate principles of Buddhism. Such activities in no way constitute direct intervention in politics by a religious group, nor an ambition to govern for the Gakkai’s benefit.

“In our ongoing efforts to fulfill our mission as Buddhists, we are actively addressing all kinds of issues to create a society where all can live happily and securely. The fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism, which the Daishonin expounded, means achieving perfect accord between personal happiness and social prosperity. This, I want to emphasize, is why we support candidates for government office.”

Shin'ichi had continued to press forward calmly amid the relentless barrage of criticism directed at the Gakkai. He had personally borne the full brunt of all attacks and energetically rebutted the detractors’ charges. His sole concern — the objective of his brave, tireless efforts — was to encourage and inspire the members.

***(To be continued)***