

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

Translation of parts 30–35 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.

As he spoke, Eiji Kawasaki occasionally became choked with emotion. But he continued:

“The seeds of kosen-rufu that President Yamamoto sowed in countries around the world have in no time put down deep roots and begun to sprout. The year before last, when he visited the United States, the America General Chapter’s membership was somewhere between 400 and 500 households — now it comprises five chapters and a membership of 3,000 households. Our friends in the United States have realized tremendous development.

“Also, the Southeast Asia General Chapter now has a membership of 5,000 households spread over two chapters. As for Europe, at the time of President Yamamoto’s visit there were not more than 10 households practicing. But in the past six months, we have grown to 43 households.

“In Paris, we are holding regular discussion meetings, which are well attended by members from a wide variety of backgrounds and professions, including many artists. In West Germany, there are seven members who work for a coal mine and are showing fine results in their work, winning the trust of those around them.

“Through President Yamamoto’s efforts, the curtain has opened on the era of worldwide kosen-rufu. I expect that our endeavors to pioneer new frontiers will entail unforeseeable trials, as well as much hard work. While in Europe, President Yamamoto said to me: ‘It’s hard being a pioneer. But that’s what makes it so fulfilling and the benefits so great.’ Taking these words deeply to heart, I pledge to exert myself further to develop our movement for the peace and happiness of humanity. Thank you very much.”

Shin’ichi Yamamoto led the applause. He was delighted to see Kawasaki developing as a solid leader of kosen-rufu.

Shin’ichi was also determined to dedicate his life to blazing new trails for peace and friendship based on spreading the ideals of the Daishonin’s Buddhism throughout the world. But unless there were others to advance with him along this path, to help solidify and broaden this path, the wilderness would soon reclaim it. Therefore, he was delighted beyond measure that Kawasaki had made a commitment to lead these efforts in Europe.

Shin’ichi was constantly preoccupied with the thought of what would become of kosen-rufu if he were no longer on the scene. Though he was only 34, he had been sickly much of his life. And given that he was constantly on the move, exerting every ounce of his strength, it would not be surprising if he were to suddenly fall ill.

That is why he so strongly hoped for capable people who could carry on in his stead. He channeled his greatest effort into finding and raising such individuals, cherishing each encounter as an occasion that might never come again, so putting his entire life and being into encouraging everyone he met.

Still, not even one other person truly understood Shin’ichi’s heart.

Next on the program were short addresses by divisional representatives. Student Division Chief Goro Watari, Young Women’s Division Chief Tokie Tani, Young Men’s Division Chief Shoichi Tanida and a number of general chapter leaders gave their determinations for the coming year.

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Then, after greetings by several directors and the Study Department chief, High Priest Nittatsu delivered a lecture. He began by warmly congratulating everyone: “On this occasion of the 24th Soka Gakkai Headquarters General Meeting, I express my profound respect for, and offer my congratulations to, all Soka Gakkai members on the tremendous results of their propagation efforts.”

He said that many people in Japanese society interpreted the Buddhist concept of attaining enlightenment to mean achieving a state of nonself (Jpn *muga*), necessitating the extinction of all earthly desires and worldly attachments. Refuting this view, High Priest Nittatsu declared that enlightenment means believing — in thought, word and deed — in Nam-myoho-enge-kyo of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism of sowing, without having to extinguish earthly desires or cut ourselves off from the world.

In addition, he stressed that the place where we practice faith is itself the Pure Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. The Grand Reception Hall under construction at the head temple on President Yamamoto’s initiative, he said, would epitomize this unsurpassed enlightened realm.

He added: “Looking over the architect’s plans for this structure, I was quite unexpectedly struck that the overall shape of the reception hall resembles that of a traditional altar for enshrining the Gohonzon. Our gathering there to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, therefore, will precisely mirror the appearance of the Gohonzon itself.

“The Daishonin says, ‘Abutsu-bo is the Treasure Tower itself, and the Treasure Tower is Abutsu-bo himself’ (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 30). In the same way, the reception hall and those who gather therein will give form to the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light. The fact that construction of such a pure land is now proceeding steadily, day by day, is truly a cause for rejoicing.”

He concluded by calling on the members to make further strides in accomplishing the great undertaking of kosen-rufu, with both clergy and laity uniting solidly. High Priest Nittatsu’s comments on the significance of the reception hall filled the participants with a deep sense of pride and joy at having contributed to this wonderful project. The Gakkai members felt assured that the priesthood would eternally treasure the reception hall, which they had built out of their sincere faith as followers of Nichiren Daishonin.

A priest named Shinno Abe, who would later become the 67th high priest Nikken — and order the Grand Reception Hall torn down — sat on stage at that meeting with Nittatsu. At that time, he was the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood’s Study Department chief. It is impossible to fathom the thoughts that must have been going through Abe’s head as he listened to the words of High Priest Nittatsu whom he, as a priest, should have regarded as his mentor and teacher.

After becoming high priest, Nikken methodically set about razing the buildings that the Soka Gakkai had donated to the head temple during Nittatsu’s time, thus negating his predecessor’s achievements. There can be no denying that this constitutes a serious betrayal of his mentor.

After High Priest Nittatsu’s lecture, Vice General Director Kiyoshi Jujo and General Director Koichi Harayama said a few words. At last it was then time for President Yamamoto to speak.

“Now, an address from our president!” the master of ceremonies’ voice rang out, followed by an explosion of applause. Everyone present had exerted themselves earnestly with Shin’ichi, valiantly following his lead and together sharing both the great struggles and joys of victory. Proud of the magnificent development their movement had achieved over the past two years, they waited eagerly for Shin’ichi to take the podium.

He began by thanking the members for their part in making the 24th General Meeting

such a brilliant success. Then he made a pledge for his third year as president, his voice resounding with conviction:

“Setting my sights on May 3 next year, and engraving more deeply in my heart the golden words ‘This I will state. Let the gods forsake me. Let all persecutions assail me. Still I will give my life for the sake of the Law’ (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 174), I am resolved to work with all of you and do everything I can to lead the way to even greater victory. With the Gohonzon as our eternal foundation, let us make the Soka Gakkai the pillar of Japan and advance with indestructible unity for the happiness of the people and prosperity of society.”

The audience responded to President Yamamoto’s call for fresh progress with enthusiastic applause.

Shin’ichi next confirmed that the Lotus Sutra is the highest Buddhist teaching and that the Law contained in its depths, that Nichiren Daishonin revealed, is Buddhism’s ultimate, supreme essence.

He then discussed the relationship of Buddhism to culture. He explained how, during the third century B.C.E., the Indian king Ashoka had built a nation that encouraged the flourishing of culture and the arts based on Buddhist principles. And how, in the second century B.C.E., during the reign of King Kanishka, another well-known supporter and protector of Buddhism, Gandharan art and civilization had prospered in northern India.

Shin’ichi further mentioned how culture had flourished in Tang-dynasty China (705–905) with the dissemination of the doctrinal theory of a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms, as revealed in T’ien-t’ai’s *Great Concentration and Insight*. And how Heian-era Japan (782–1185) had similarly seen a flowering of culture with the spread of Dengyo’s revelation of the Lotus Sutra’s theoretical teaching. Superlative culture blossoms, Shin’ichi explained, when the correct Buddhist teaching gains wide currency.

“These facts,” he continued, “illustrate that when people make the correct teaching their foundation and actualize the principle of the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism, the most wonderful culture will be born. The realization of a peaceful and harmonious society will be made possible.

“Moreover, Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, the teaching that can lead the way to happiness for all people of the Latter Day of the Law, is the essence of the Lotus Sutra and the very highest teaching. The purpose of our great kosen-rufu movement is to bring about, through the ideals and principles of Buddhism, an unprecedented, magnificent flowering of humanistic culture. And to enable all people to become happy and society to prosper.”

Reading from the Gosho, Shin’ichi next described what a society in which the Daishonin’s Buddhism had become widely established would be like:

“In ‘On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings,’ Nichiren Daishonin describes the time of kosen-rufu as follows:

In that time because all people chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo together, the wind will not beleaguer the branches or boughs, nor will the rain fall hard enough to break a clod. The world will become as it was in the ages of Fu Hsi and Shen Nung in ancient China. Disasters will be driven from the land, and the people will be rid of misfortune. They will also learn the art of living long, fulfilling lives. Realize that the time will come when the truth will be revealed that both the Person and the Law are unaging and eternal. There cannot be the slightest doubt about the sutra’s solemn promise of a peaceful life in this world. (MW-1, 101–102)

“Indeed, when all people chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo together, they will no longer be troubled by natural disasters, as the Daishonin indicates when he says that the wind will

blow gently without disturbing the branches, rain will not fall hard enough to break apart a dirt clod, everything will grow and flourish in a healthy way and the world will become as peaceful and prosperous as the ideal societies achieved by Fu Hsi and Shen Nung in legend.

“Changes in people’s lives realized through the Mystic Law are unfailingly reflected in the natural environment. Also, wisdom cultivated through faith will make possible a society in which, for instance, safety measures are taken to ensure that people will not suffer harm in the event of such natural disasters as torrential rains or typhoons.

“Furthermore, the Daishonin promises that people can attain the means to avoid disasters and lead long, healthy lives in this existence. He tells us that when we base our lives on the Mystic Law, we can enjoy boundless happiness and realize the profound truth that both our lives and the Mystic Law are eternal and unaging. The Daishonin further declares that when this happens, the passage in the ‘Parable of the Medicinal Herbs’ chapter of the Lotus Sutra that ‘they will enjoy peace and security in their present existence’ (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 99), will become a reality. The purpose of our faith is to build such a happy, peaceful society.”

The French thinker and mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623–62), who described people as “thinking reeds,” made the observation that “by space the universe encompasses and swallows me up like a mere speck; by thought I comprehend the universe.”¹ This strikes a chord with the Buddhist perspective that a single life-moment or concentrated thought encompasses the universe.

Many members present had fought their way back valiantly from the edge of despair to rebuild their lives through faith. Shin’ichi now reaffirmed that their determination could effect a powerful change not only in their lives, but in the times, society and the entire universe. With this message, he hoped to awaken them to their mission as the true protagonists of history, propelling them to rise above the lesser self, to reveal the higher, greater self.

The participants who packed the hall earnestly fixed their gaze on President Yamamoto, not wanting to miss a single word.

And Shin’ichi’s voice resounded with conviction: “Japan’s greatest misfortune today is that it lacks solid ideals or a sound philosophy that can contribute to people’s happiness and create lasting peace. The country is deficient in a philosophy that upholds the sanctity of life and nurtures a spirit of compassion. The Japanese are bereft of any guiding principle for instilling basic values and teaching people the right way to live, leaving our society without a spiritual backbone.

“As a result, we find that in government, economy and even education, confusion and uncertainty reign. And there is no solid vision for the future. Japan may be enjoying increased economic prosperity, but if it continues on its present course it will grow evermore spiritually desolate and surely meet an impasse in every sphere, including government, the economy and education.

“I declare that Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism will become the spiritual backbone, the lofty ideal, the sublime philosophy that will save our country.” Shin’ichi’s words were met with loud applause. He had reaffirmed for the participants the profound social significance of their efforts to spread the Daishonin’s teachings.

He went on: “When we consider Japan’s future and the world in the 21st century, it is clear that the time is definitely coming when our message and efforts will receive their due recognition and praise. In fact, things have already begun to move in this direction.

“That said, however, the more the Gakkai is applauded, the greater will be the jealousy

of those who resent our success. The more strident the criticism arising from misconceptions and prejudice will be. There is no doubt we will also have to deal with plots by people seeking to obstruct our movement to spread the Law.

“Yet no matter what happens, let’s resolve to never be defeated by any persecution or oppression by authoritarian power. Placing utmost faith in the golden words of Nichiren Daishonin and in the Gohonzon, let’s continue to advance with courage and confidence, persevering on the lofty path of faith to the very end. I am praying for your continued efforts, your excellent health and the prosperity of your families. Thank you.”

The members’ enthusiastic applause reverberated through the vast, dome-ceilinged auditorium. Each participant’s heart blazed with a determination to build a culture and society that existed for the benefit of its people.

The 24th General Meeting concluded with a jubilant Gakkai song and a formal closing announcement. The Soka Gakkai had now made its fresh start toward May 3 the following year.

Warmed by early summer breezes, the members joyously resumed their spirited efforts to spread the Daishonin’s teachings. They were ecstatic that they were practicing Buddhism not just to resolve their own small problems, but for the great, noble purpose of creating an ideal society of peace and security as described in the Goshō.

Faith cultivates character. And character thus refined engenders a deeper awareness of one’s mission to create a more humane society.

The evening of May 3, a terrible train accident occurred on the Joban main line between Mikawashima and Minami-Senju stations, both located in Arakawa Ward in northern Tokyo. Around 9:35 p.m., an outbound freight train ran through a red signal light just past Mikawashima Station, crashing at considerable speed into a bumping post and jumping its tracks. The locomotive was left leaning slightly to one side, partially obstructing the neighboring track of the outbound main line.

Then, moments later, an outbound passenger train for Toride came hurtling down the main line from Mikawashima Station and sideswiped the leaning locomotive. The passenger train’s first two cars were derailed, obstructing another set of parallel tracks for inbound trains heading toward the main terminal, Ueno, in Tokyo.

Since it was a public holiday, the train for Toride was packed with people returning from leisure outings, carrying approximately 1,200 passengers, 50 percent more than normal capacity. Passengers climbed out of the derailed train and began walking along the inbound track back toward Mikawashima Station.

A short time later, a speeding passenger train inbound for Ueno came down that same track and crashed head-on into a car of the derailed train blocking its path, creating a massive three-train pileup. The front four cars of the third train were thrown off the tracks, three of them veering sidelong down an embankment about seven meters high, then smashing into a two-story warehouse beside it. More tragically, when this train collided with the derailed train, it struck passengers who had alighted and were making their way along the tracks, hurling many into the air.

One accident had led to another, giving rise to still another and culminating in a major tragedy. In all, the Mikawashima train crash resulted in 160 deaths and 325 injuries.

There had been another train accident earlier the same day. The morning of May 3, shortly after 1:00 a.m., a freight train had rammed a passenger train at Koga Station on the Tohoku main line, injuring 40 people. The accident was caused by the driver of the freight train dozing off and failing to notice a signal light.

May 3 is a national holiday in Japan, commemorating the day the constitution, which

safeguards people's fundamental rights, came into effect. It was a sad irony that two train accidents, one before dawn and one after dusk, took place on this day — and that one, the accident at Mikawashima, turned into a disaster of nightmarish proportions.

(To be continued)

1. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées: Notes on Religion and Other Subjects*, ed. Louis Lafuma, trans. John Warrington (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1960), p. 58.

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