

The New Human Revolution, Volume 6, Chapter 5
Young Eagles
By HO GOKU – Illustrated by KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Translation of parts 12–14 of the ‘Young Eagles’ 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.

At the end of his speech, Shin’ichi Yamamoto made the following proposal: “I ask you of the student division to conduct a thorough investigation into which is superior, Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism or other philosophies and systems of thought such as existentialism and Marxism. Please do research that is bold, objective and dogma-free, comparing these philosophies in terms of which provides a complete picture of human life, which offers the fundamental solution to human suffering, which best addresses the realities of daily living, and which can be fully verified by fact.

“And if through your research you conclude that this Buddhism is indeed the greatest of all philosophies and the only true means for leading humanity out of misery and toward happiness, then I ask you to put that conviction into action. Wholeheartedly embracing Nichiren Daishonin’s magnificent teaching, please become friends and allies of the people, and devote your lives to helping those who are suffering find true fulfillment.”

Shin’ichi had absolute faith in Buddhism. He knew that if the student division members earnestly carried out such a comparative study of the Daishonin’s Buddhism and other philosophies, they would eventually come to realize which was the superior and most profound.

But many student division members at that time did not share the same unshakable faith. In the late 1950s and early ’60s, many Japanese youth, galvanized by the debate over revisions to the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty, had strong Marxist leanings. Although most student division members were beginning to recognize that without a human revolution or fundamental transformation in people’s hearts and minds such as that brought about through Buddhist practice, there could be no true reformation of society, many still felt that the road of human revolution was the long way around.

The reactions of the student division members to the frequent student demonstrations against the proposed treaty revision had been varied. Some had been sympathetic to the demonstrations because they had friends who participated, though they themselves refused to. Others, convinced that social revolution was the first priority, had participated in the demonstrations, including the storming of the Japanese Diet compound on June 15, 1960, in which some student division members had been injured.

But a newly revised Security Treaty was enacted in spite of their efforts, and university campuses around Japan were swept with a desolate feeling of futility. This made the time particularly ripe to declare Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism the pivotal philosophy for realizing positive social change. But most of the student division members, not having delved fully into either Buddhism or the then–widely prevalent Marxist philosophy, were unable to assert the superiority of the Daishonin’s teaching with confidence.

Shin’ichi wanted the students to have a strong desire for knowledge. That was what it meant to be a student, he believed.

Without serious inquiry, one cannot fully appreciate the true value of the principles and philosophy of Buddhism. The more one studies and compares the Daishonin’s teaching with other religions and philosophies, the more one becomes aware of its excellence.

The 5th Student Division General Meeting concluded with a rousing rendition of the new division song, “Young Reformers,” led by Goro Watar, student division chief.

Stepping down from the stage, Shin’ichi headed toward the audience seating area and then exited the hall via one of the aisles, waving and calling out to the members as he went. It was a gesture expressing his desire to advance side-by-side with the student division members toward kosen-rufu.

The next morning, Goro went to thank Shin’ichi for attending the previous day’s general meeting.

“It was my pleasure,” Shin’ichi said. “And congratulations! It looks like the student division has made a fresh start.”

“Yes, I believe so,” agreed Goro. “Today, I’ve come to ask you again about lecturing us on the Gosho.”

“Don’t worry, I haven’t forgotten,” Shin’ichi assured him. “We’ll start soon. How about the end of August for our first lecture? Let’s aim for one lecture a month, and I think 40 or 50 members, men and women, would be a good size for such a gathering.

“Universities today are conducting education more and more like a mass production assembly line, and we don’t want that. The group can be made up mainly of the student division leaders who have participated in our informal meetings along with some representatives from Kansai and other areas.

“As for the Gosho we’ll study, let’s make it the ‘Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings.’ Seeing that the lectures will be for the student division, I feel we should study something a little difficult.”

“Yes...uh, thank you!” Goro stumbled over his words, unable to conceal his surprise and reservation.

“Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” is a vital collection of the most profound teachings of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. Goro was worried whether the members would be able to follow lectures on such a difficult subject.

Noting his expression, Shin’ichi said with a smile: “When you and others formed the Tokyo University Lotus Sutra Study Group and attended lectures on the Lotus Sutra by President Toda based on the ‘Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,’ you had only just joined the Soka Gakkai. Don’t worry! The student division leaders today are ahead of where you were then. They are all members of the Soka Gakkai Study Department. They’ll do just fine — you’ll see.

“‘Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings’ represents the quintessence of all systems of thought and philosophy. It fully elucidates the principles of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism — its view of life, religion, the cosmos. The time has now come for the Soka Gakkai to apply those principles to realizing human happiness and prosperity in every realm, including government, business, education, art, literature and journalism. That is why I want the student division leaders to study the ‘Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings’ and gain a profound understanding of the matchless philosophy and principles of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

“From among the student division members I personally train, I am determined to foster the Soka Gakkai’s successors and great leaders of society.”

Shin’ichi’s words deeply moved Goro.

Goro quickly related to the other student division leaders that President Yamamoto planned to lecture to them on the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings.” They were overjoyed. Selection of the lecture series’ participants progressed under Goro’s direction.

Shin’ichi, for his part, spared no effort in preparing for the lectures. He pondered long

and deeply each night, racking his brains over how to best teach and communicate the essence of this ultimate Buddhist scripture to the students.

He recalled being invited to sit in on what was President Toda's final lecture on the Lotus Sutra to the student division's Tokyo University study group on Sept. 27, 1955. Like the other participants, Shin'ichi had been determined to engrave every single word of his mentor in his heart and mind. When the lecture was finished, Toda had said to the whole group: "In the future, if there is anything you don't understand, just ask Shin'ichi here. All right?"

"Yes!" everyone answered.

"Good," Toda continued. "Now, the next lecture will be my last in this series."

But as it turned out, the next lecture never took place. That night was effectively his final lecture in a two-and-a-half-year series with the group.

Shin'ichi couldn't help thinking of Toda's words on that occasion as his wish for the future — something he was calling on Shin'ichi to fulfill after he was gone. Shin'ichi felt it his mission to carry on Toda's work in giving lectures on the Lotus Sutra to the student division members, the next generation of Soka Gakkai leaders. He believed that his planned lectures on the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" would serve that purpose.

Toda, who had awakened to the ultimate meaning of the Lotus Sutra while in prison, had lectured on the Lotus Sutra based on the "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" and had revitalized Buddhism as a fundamental philosophy of life in the modern age. Now, Shin'ichi, through his lectures on this key Goshō, hoped to reveal the philosophy of Nichiren Daishōnin's Buddhism as a guiding principle that would shape a new era.

The times called for such a fresh guiding principle. The escalating Cold War, fueled by the opposing ideologies of East and West, had cast a dark pall over hopes for human harmony. Though many protested vociferously against nuclear weapons, the great powers raced to increase their arsenals. In Japan, the cost of its "economic miracle" was just beginning to be felt in the form of serious environmental pollution. At the same time, all aspects of Japanese life — government and education particularly — were beginning to reveal their defects.

Shin'ichi believed the time had come for the life philosophy of Buddhism, the principle of human rights and the ethos of peace, to be transmitted to the world. Such were the thoughts that occupied his mind as he spent his days studying and carefully preparing for the lecture series.

(To be continued)