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At the Hong Kong chapter meeting, Shin'ichi Yamamoto says, 'The key to attaining happiness is having the strength of spirit to withstand any obstacle or challenge, possessing the wisdom to create value and fostering a rich heart that overflows with joy and hope.'

When Shin'ichi Yamamoto arrived at the Lap Sun Building, where the Hong Kong Chapter meeting was to be held, a young boy, about 10 years old, was standing in front of the elevator. He wore a suit and tie and a Traffic Control Group armband with Soka Gakkai written on it. The boy was obviously assisting the event staff. Shin'ichi said "Thank you!" in Japanese and smiled at him. The boy had no idea who Shin'ichi was and looked at him blankly. But when he saw Shin'ichi's smile, he smiled back.

Resounding applause greeted Shin'ichi as he entered the room. The lyric sheets to Gakkai songs such as "Song of the New Century" and "Song of Kosen-rufu in Asia"—in both Japanese and the romanized transliteration of Japanese—hung on the wall at the front of the room. Several chairs lined the wall, and when Shin'ichi and the others took their places, the meeting began.

Tamako Uema, Fukuyasu Takami and the leaders traveling with Shin'ichi each delivered greetings. There were an increasing number of new members who didn't speak Japanese—a testimony to the advancement of kosen-rufu in Hong Kong—so the speeches were interpreted into Cantonese.

Kiyoshi Jujo announced the establishment of the three Hong Kong districts—Chungyan, Kowloon and Wanchai—and introduced the new leadership appointments. Shin'ichi addressed the gathering next, speaking with strong conviction about the power of the Gohonzon.

His conclusion was that "the key to attaining happiness is having the strength of spirit to withstand any obstacle or challenge, possessing the wisdom to create value and fostering a rich heart that overflows with joy and hope. Moreover, to bring true prosperity to society requires genuine concern for others, friendship and trust.

"In other words, everything begins with our inner transformation. Buddhism shows us the way to achieve this human revolution and teaches the principles for absolute happiness and lasting peace. I sincerely hope that all of you will shine brilliantly with the light of humanity as you turn Hong Kong into a garden of happiness."

The meeting closed with a rousing chorus of Soka Gakkai songs.

When it was over, Shin'ichi spoke with the interpreter, Chow Chi Kong, and his wife, Chow Chui Yok Jane. Chow Chi Kong had been appointed Hong Kong Chapter vice leader when Southeast Asia General Chapter Leader Kazumasa Morikawa and other senior Gakkai leaders had made a guidance tour of Southeast Asia in August and September 1962, the previous year.

Mr. Chow was a good-natured man of about 50 who ran a trading company. Mr. Morikawa and Southeast Asia General Chapter Chief Vice Leader Fukuyasu Takami had both mentioned to Shin'ichi that they wanted to make Chow the leader of Hong Kong Chapter in the future. His wife had been appointed that day as women's division leader of the new Wanchai District.

“Ah, Mr. Chow!” Shin’ichi said, “We are thinking about asking you to take over as leader of Hong Kong Chapter in the near future. I hope that from today you’ll take full responsibility for Hong Kong Chapter, as if you were already the chapter leader.”

“I will,” Chow answered. “I only joined the Soka Gakkai 15 months ago, so there is still much I don’t understand. But I will do everything I can to meet your expectations.”

“By the way, your Japanese is excellent,” Shin’ichi remarked.

A gentle smile appeared on Chow’s face. “Actually, I am Japanese,” he said. “I was born in Kagoshima [in Kyushu, Japan] and moved to Guangzhou, China, to work for a trading company, when I was a young man. While I was there, I met and married my wife, and then the war came. After the war, I adopted a Chinese name and came to Hong Kong.”

Chow went on to explain his background in more detail: He was the youngest of three children. His father, a fisherman, died when he was only 1 year old, and his mother died when he was 9. For a while he fished with his brothers, but then he went to China to work for a Japanese-run clothing business. He started out doing odd jobs and gradually learned the ropes.

After several years, he went to Guangzhou, where he began working for a trading company. That’s where he met his future wife, who was employed as an accountant for a Japanese company there. She was an only child, and her father had died. They fell in love, but her friends and relatives opposed the idea of her marrying a Japanese man.

Her mother, however, agreed. Soon after they wed, the war ended, and all the Japanese who had been in China during the Japanese occupation had to leave.

Chow said to his mother-in-law: “I have seen what the Japanese army has done here in China, and it is horrible. I cannot think of such a country as my homeland. I will live in China as a Chinese.”

But that would not be so easy. If he were discovered to be Japanese, he would be arrested, and strong anti-Japanese sentiment among the people made him a potential target for violent retribution.

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the
novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto.
The events take place in 1963.