

THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
'AT THE HELM'
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Shin'ichi Yamamoto's message 'To the Women's Division' inspires women's division members across Japan. 'Full of happy anticipation, they ventured out, braving the cold winter wind, to tell others about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.'

Excitement pervaded the women's division leaders meeting with the introduction of Shin'ichi Yamamoto's message "To the Women's Division." The participants listened with bright-eyed enthusiasm as one of the leaders began to read. When they heard the sentence "I state that you, the Soka Gakkai women's division members, are pioneers of the Mystic Law, who champion the cause of true liberation for women," the listeners were deeply inspired.

Many of them were suffering from financial difficulties or illnesses and had been striving earnestly in faith out of a desperate, single-minded desire to change the unfortunate destiny of their families and become happy. They understood now, though, that their Buddhist practice was not merely for realizing their own happiness; it was a means for them to fulfill the much greater, nobler mission of liberating women.

The liberation of women could not merely stop at liberation from discriminatory social policies and practices but would have to include liberation from all misery. Each member was confident through her personal experience that Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism was the only way to achieve this.

When women are firmly rooted in the realities of daily life and stand up to bring about a positive change of the times, the revival of society can begin. Kosen-rufu means to make the community or society in which one lives pleasant and peaceful.

After Shin'ichi's message to the women's division was read, Women's Division Leader Katsu Kiyohara addressed the audience: "This is a historic day for the women's division. I heard that after finishing his first draft of this guidance, President Yamamoto reread and revised it again and again. I also deeply feel that his writing this message on President Toda's birthday is his way of urging us to make Mr. Toda's will our own and realize kosen-rufu without fail.

"In his message, President Yamamoto says that we are the 'pioneers of the Mystic Law, who champion the cause of true liberation for women.' In other words, our mission as members of the Soka Gakkai women's division is not only to create happiness for our families and ourselves but to turn our gaze to society as a whole. We must work to free all women from the karmic chains that bind them.

"We have the responsibility, then, to bring happiness to everyone in our respective communities, members and nonmembers alike. From that standpoint, whatever level of the organization we are responsible for—even if it seems to be only on a small scale, like the block level—we possess an infinitely important mission."

Ms. Kiyohara said with emphasis: "The strength of the Soka Gakkai block-level organization, firmly grounded as it is in the local community, has been proven in times of emergency, such as during typhoons or fires. The exemplary teamwork, cooperation and mutual support our members display in these circumstances have evoked high praise

inside and outside of our organization. I can't begin to recount all the times that I have heard people say, for instance, how Soka Gakkai members helped them during a typhoon or worked with them to put out a fire.

"Let's continue to exert ourselves wholeheartedly in our activities for kosen-rufu, resolved to help and encourage each and every suffering person in our communities, not only during emergencies but on a daily basis as well."

Inspired by this meeting, the participants began their activities for the second half of February with a fresh determination. Women's division members all over the country eagerly awaited the publication of the message "To the Women's Division" in the March *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai's monthly study journal. Full of happy anticipation, they ventured out, braving the cold winter wind, to tell others about the Daishonin's Buddhism.

In the latter half of February, Shin'ichi visited the Kansai, Shikoku and Chugoku regions of Japan to encourage the members. The morning of Feb. 20, small groups of people could be seen making their way down the streets of Kyoto, which was covered in a fine blanket of silvery snow, toward Kyoto Station. Construction was finally finished on the Soka Gakkai's long-awaited new Kyoto Headquarters Building, and these members were on their way to participate in the completion ceremony.

The Kyoto Headquarters was located in a section of Higashi-Kujo in Kyoto's Minami Ward, near Kyoto Station. The new three-story reinforced concrete building rose majestically above the tile-roofed houses of the surrounding residential area. The members who had come to participate in the completion ceremony gathered near the entrance, waiting in the lightly falling snow for President Yamamoto to arrive.

It stopped snowing at about 10:00 a.m., and by 10:30, when Shin'ichi arrived, the sun was peeking through the clouds. Shin'ichi got out of the car a short distance from the Headquarters and greeted the waiting members, expressing his gratitude for all their hard work, as he made his way toward the building.

As he entered the courtyard of the Headquarters, he heard a voice shout, "President Yamamoto!" It came from an elderly woman, who was standing there waiting to greet him. She had been there for quite a while, hoping to see Shin'ichi. In her excitement at finally seeing him, she must have been unable to stop herself from calling out to him.

Shin'ichi walked up to her and said with a warm smile: "Thank you for waiting so long this morning. You must be cold. I don't want you to catch a cold, so let's go inside." Shin'ichi took the woman's hand and escorted her into the building.

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