

**THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
'SECURING THE FOUNDATION'
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Shin'ichi Yamamoto encourages a young women's leader who is full of fresh ideas—some of which her seniors do not accept. 'Those who become discouraged just because others do not accept their ideas are not qualified to work for kosen-rufu,' he tells her.

Michiyo Watari, the new Soka Gakkai young women's leader, became involved in the socialist movement during her high school days. She wanted to find a solution to the contradictions of a society that ignored the plight of the poor and the weak, and to help build a peaceful nation. But she was discouraged to see how the other activists, having sacrificed their happiness for their cause, ultimately wound up in despair.

Also, realizing that there were so many problems that social reform alone could not resolve, such as incurable disease and family discord, Michiyo began to feel that the socialist movement had its limitations.

Around this time, she learned about the Soka Gakkai from Seiichiro Koyama, a young man who delivered milk to her home. His assertion that Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism aimed to achieve both social prosperity and individual happiness inspired her to take faith.

Michiyo joined the Soka Gakkai in November 1952, while she was a university student. She began practicing with the intention that she would give it her all for one year—but if she didn't get the results she was looking for by then, she would quit.

Determined to get something out of her efforts, Michiyo exerted herself diligently in her Buddhist practice. She visited the Soka Gakkai Headquarters branch office in Ichigaya, Tokyo, almost every day and even sought guidance on occasion from President Toda. Eventually, she came to firmly believe that only the Daishonin's Buddhism had the power to liberate people from their sufferings.

When a year had passed, Michiyo strengthened her determination to live out her life with the Soka Gakkai. After graduating from college, she began working for the Headquarters as a *Seikyo Shimbun* correspondent. She was the first woman to hold such a position.

As a reporter, she placed great importance on the social perspective of any story she covered. When, for example, she reported on the experience of someone who had overcome an illness through faith, she would visit the attending doctor and find out how he or she viewed the recovery from the medical standpoint. She made a conscious effort to write articles that were free of dogma and that would convince others of the power of Buddhism.

She would also call upon noted editors of magazines or other publications and ask their opinion of the *Seikyo Shimbun*. Her desire for self-improvement was strong, and she always strove for perfection in her work. Our personal growth depends to a large degree on whether we possess such a desire for self-improvement.

Michiyo became the head of the planning department in the young women's division and, under the leadership of Young Women's Leader Tokie Tani, began to demonstrate enormous ability. She was full of fresh ideas, but as a result, her seniors in the women's and young women's divisions did not always accept them. Frustrated, she often went to Shin'ichi Yamamoto for guidance.

Shin'ichi wanted Michiyo to fully utilize her talents to benefit the young women. For this reason, he was sometimes strict with her.

Once, when Michiyo came to him disheartened because a proposal in which she had been quite confident was rejected, Shin'ichi said to her: "In one sense, kosen-rufu is a bloodless revolution to create happiness and peace for all people. Even socialist revolutionaries have fought with their lives, enduring one persecution after another without compromising their ideals.

"Those who become discouraged just because others do not accept their ideas are not qualified to work for kosen-rufu."

With that, Michiyo renewed her resolve and threw herself back into activities—so much so that she began to neglect her physical appearance. Seeing this, Shin'ichi said to her: "As a leader of young women, it is important to pay attention to how you look and dress, and to always try to be neat and presentable. Women at the top of their fields throughout the world are careful about this. No one will follow a leader who lacks inner latitude."

On another occasion he said: "If you are always trying to do everything yourself according to how you want it, your members will not grow. It is important to think about how to enable each member to cheerfully and joyfully make the most of her potential and to put the spotlight on others, not on yourself.

"It is also vital to listen carefully to what others have to say and to be warm and accepting. A leader who is cold and mechanical will only end up rejected by everyone. Always remember that the purpose of faith is to polish our humanity."

Michiyo steadily developed her capacity as a leader of the young women.

In May 1959, the year after President Toda's death, she married Goro Watari. He was also a *Seikyo Shimbun* reporter, and the two had fallen in love.

When they came to tell Shin'ichi that they were to be married, he said: "Is that so? Congratulations! I know that if Mr. Toda were still alive, he would be very happy."

President Toda had once told Shin'ichi that he would like to see the two young people get together because he thought they would make a charming couple, and Shin'ichi had never forgotten this.

Michiyo continued to work for the *Seikyo Shimbun* after marrying and even after giving birth. She also continued to fulfill her responsibilities as the head of the planning department of the young women's division. She was determined to carry out her mission without retreating a single step, no matter how her circumstances might change.

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