

**THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION  
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*The turning point in Haru Fujisawa's practice comes when she decides to take the Study Department Entrance Examination. Haru is deeply moved by the commitment of a leader who travels some 20 hours by ship at her own expense to help the members study.*

While traveling late one night, the chapter leader of Amami Oshima Chapter, Takashi Nogawa, was suddenly overcome with fatigue. He stopped his bike and lay down by the roadside. He awoke to the feel of something on his stomach. When he became aware it was a poisonous snake native to the southern Japanese islands crawling across his stomach, he froze in terror. He knew that if he shouted or moved, he was likely to get bitten; so he held his breath and lay as still as he could, chanting furiously in his mind.

The snake slowly made its way across Nogawa's abdomen and slithered away. The whole incident had lasted only about 10 seconds, but it seemed like hours.

There was always a risk of encountering these snakes, called *habu*, on the islands of Amami Oshima and Tokunoshima. They are nocturnal, so night travel was especially dangerous—but since Nogawa needed to travel at night, he often chanted as he went. He was constantly praying under his breath, whether on his bike or on foot.

When traveling by ship, he would voraciously read Soka Gakkai publications and Nichiren Daishonin's writings. He would express his attitude toward study as follows: "I only attended elementary school, and I'm not very smart, so unless I study very hard I can't keep up with other people. When you're working to propagate Buddhism, you need to have the ability to convince others. To get that ability, I have to study twice as much as anyone else."

The more he traveled from island to island and the harder he exerted himself, the more strain it put on his family budget. His wife Yoshimi scrimped and scrimped, barely making ends meet. But when her husband would ask her if she could afford to give him some money, she would always smile reassuringly and say, "Yes," and hand him what he needed, even if it left her without enough to buy food.

She knew that her husband was working for the happiness of the people of the Amami Islands, and she was determined to at least take care of the household in his absence. That was her personal vow. They both felt it was their mission and a great honor to dedicate their lives to the lofty goal of helping others become happy and realizing peace based on the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Haru Fujisawa, who was to be appointed Amami Oshima General Chapter women's division leader, was a wise, kindhearted woman in her 50s. Her husband Keisuke was a high school teacher and a scholar of local history. They both were born in the Amami Islands, but they married in Tokyo. Later they went to Manchuria, and there saw the end of World War II. After the war, they returned to Amami.

Haru had always been physically weak, which kept her in bed sick for the good part of each month. Her greatest wish was to be healthy. She'd had several miscarriages and stillbirths and three of her children had died early, leaving her with one surviving daughter.

Haru joined the Soka Gakkai in December 1956. Her daughter Chizuko was accepted to a high school in Kagoshima City in southern Kyushu, and Haru went to live there with her while her husband remained on Amami. In Kagoshima City, Haru's nephew Saburo Shigehara came for a visit and began to talk to Chizuko about Buddhism. Shigehara had once had tuberculosis, in those days considered an incurable disease, and had overcome it through the power of faith.

At first, Chizuko wasn't interested in what her cousin had to say about Buddhism, but eventually she was struck by his complete conviction that through Buddhist faith and practice all of her prayers would be answered, and she decided to join. She wrote a letter to her father asking his permission, and he wrote back saying that if she thought she was doing the right thing, he had no objections.

Haru, however, was skeptical about religion in general, and didn't want her daughter to get caught up in something strange. So she decided to join the Soka Gakkai herself in order to keep a close eye on her daughter and protect her.

Chizuko graduated from high school and entered a pharmaceutical college in Shizuoka Prefecture, and Haru returned to Amami. Though she was now a member of the Soka Gakkai, Haru was not particularly active or involved.

The turning point came when, at the strong encouragement of another member, she decided to take the study department entrance examination. A leader would come all the way from the Kagoshima mainland every week to help the members study for the exam. Haru was deeply moved by the commitment of this leader, who would voluntarily travel some 20 hours by ship at her own expense to come and teach them.

Furthermore, as she studied Buddhism and read the Daishonin's writings, Haru's impression that all religions were merely superstitions and not to be trusted was overturned. She realized that among religious teachings there were right and wrong and profound and shallow, and that the Daishonin's Buddhism was grounded in a solid and correct philosophy.

Haru gained confidence in her practice and, after passing the examination, enthusiastically involved herself in Soka Gakkai activities. Seeing her vibrant example, her husband Keisuke also joined and began supporting his wife's Buddhist activities.

Haru had chronic liver and kidney problems, and suffered also from sciatica and high blood pressure; but as she practiced, her ailments began to subside. Her faith grew deeper as a result, and she gradually became a vigorous promoter of Buddhism. When Amami Oshima Chapter was founded, she was appointed leader of the chapter's women's division.

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