

THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
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Writing and speech are the mark of humanity. They are forces capable of resisting violence and arms and building true and lasting peace. Kosen-rufu is a fresh, humanistic movement to enable the human spirit to triumph, to create happiness and peace for all people through the written and spoken word.

On July 28, 1963, Shin'ichi Yamamoto attended the first all-Japan general meeting of the Soka Gakkai's Writers Department at Kyoritsu Auditorium in Kanda, Tokyo. The Writers Department was founded two years earlier, on May 3, 1961, when the Culture Bureau was established. At that time, Youth Leader Eisuke Akizuki had been appointed as its head.

The Writers Department at first consisted of two groups: The first, Group 1, was made up of young men's and young women's leaders, and the second, Group 2, was for professional writers. Later, at the request of the women's division, a third group was established primarily for women's division members. Its aim was to be a forum for women to voice their ideas toward building a new society. Group 2 subsequently became a men's division section of the Writers Department. Professional writers joined whichever of the three groups was appropriate to their circumstances.

The Writers Department established branches not only throughout the Tokyo metropolitan area but gradually across the country, and they became very active. In November 1962, the first issue of *Opinions*, the Writers Department monthly journal, was published. It provided a place where department members could express their ideas, and included articles on current issues as well as pointed rebuttals to criticisms of the Soka Gakkai in the mass media.

Shin'ichi contributed a short essay to the first issue. In it he declared that initiating a war of words dedicated to truth and justice could change the direction of the Cold War and the numerous armed conflicts around the world. It would be based on the conviction that "the pen is mightier than the sword." He also emphasized that Nichiren Daishonin's many letters and treatises, written out of a great desire to lead all people to happiness, were testimony to the "war of words" he had waged in accord with the fundamentals of democracy.

"The time has come for us to courageously speak out for truth and justice," he wrote, "and advance for the sake of kosen-rufu and the well-being of the people." It is the people who are responsible for sound speech and writing. In Japan, however, the people had given up thinking for themselves and abandoned speaking out to protect their human rights and dignity. Shin'ichi regarded restoring the power of words to the people as the mission of the Writers Department.

Words have tremendous power. They can change people's awareness and change the times.

That is why authorities wishing to control the people have always tried to manipulate the power of words to socially annihilate those who seek to initiate reform. Such people use the mass media to spread lies, branding reformers as evil, deviant and insane, and

trying to stir up hatred and fear.

The Soka Gakkai, dedicated to ensuring that the people are celebrated, has been consistently subjected to such perverted use of the media. Unless such wrongdoing is defeated and justice revealed, the truth will keep being distorted and trampled upon. If that is the case, the people will never win.

For this reason, Shin'ichi had put much energy into developing the Writers Department. Whenever he considered the power of words, he recalled the struggle for American independence.

In January 1776, a pamphlet titled *Common Sense* was published in Philadelphia. It appeared nine months after the battles of Lexington and Concord, where the first shots of the American Revolution were fired.

This small, 47-page pamphlet had a tremendous influence, and stirred people's desire for independence. At the time, any public call for independence invited strict surveillance from the British colonial authorities. In addition, public opinion was divided on the issue. Only about one-third of the American people supported independence. Another third were loyalists who wanted to remain a colony of England, and another third were neutral. Many who were satisfied with having gained a degree of self-rule were skeptical about full independence, and so stood by silently to see what would happen.

Against this backdrop, one thin pamphlet cried out that independence from England was a natural conclusion of "common sense." It stated: "There is something very absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island." "O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth!" "Nothing can settle our affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined declaration for independence."

These were not complicated words. They were clear, simple, and understandable to all, words that advocated with passion and conviction the need for independence.

The author signed the pamphlet, "written by an Englishman."

It eventually became known that the author of the pamphlet *Common Sense* was a 39-year-old editor named Thomas Paine. He had arrived in America from England only two years earlier and was a complete unknown. Yet his small pamphlet garnered a stunning response, selling 120,000 copies in just three months, at a time when the population of the colonies was only about 2.5 million. While this was an astonishing figure in itself, in the end the pamphlet is said to have sold more than 500,000 copies.

Those who read *Common Sense* were struck deeply by its message and came to believe that independence was America's future. The old common sense they had believed in collapsed and was replaced by a new one. An English newspaper described the effectiveness of the pamphlet, saying, "As many as read [*Common Sense*], so many became converted." George Washington, later the first president of the United States, commented on the pamphlet's "sound doctrine and unanswerable reasoning," remarking, "*Common Sense* will not leave numbers at a loss to decide upon the propriety of separation [from England]."

Farmers and poor city dwellers rushed to buy copies of *Common Sense* and soon joined the ranks of those who supported independence. One reader noted that "the public sentiment which a few weeks before [the publication of *Common Sense*] had shuddered at the tremendous obstacles, with which independence was environed, overleaped every barrier."

The pamphlet gave Americans confidence that independence could be won and roused in them the courage to stand up and act. The power of a people determined to do

something is tremendous. Nothing can stop them. Soon after, on July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was signed. Though the mood of the times called for independence, there can be no denying that this little pamphlet, written by an ordinary citizen, was instrumental in its realization.

Paine wrote, “Who the Author of this Production is, is wholly unnecessary to the Public, as the Object for Attention is the *Doctrine itself*, not the *Man*.” The power of his words changed history. It is the people who speak out for justice against the tyranny of authority and the inequities of society. That is the foundation of democracy.

Exposing and destroying the deceptions of injustice with the truth opens the way for a bright future.

To say boldly what must be said; to declare as right what is right and as wrong what is wrong—this is the true way of Buddhists. The early Buddhist teaching of the eightfold path, which outlines the way to enlightenment, exemplifies this with its inclusion of “right speech.” Right speech is defined as refraining from lying, bad language, slander, and frivolous speech. In this way, Shakyamuni taught that we should only speak the truth.

When Shakyamuni began to preach in Rajagriha [capitol of the kingdom of Magadha in ancient India and the center of many new cultural and philosophical movements], people of excellent caliber flocked to him one after another and became his disciples. Envious and fearful of this rapid development, others in the city attacked Shakyamuni with a storm of abuse. This worried his disciples, but Shakyamuni remained unfazed. He taught them to respond to such attacks by saying, “The Buddha is inviting people by means of the true dharma. Who would be jealous of this?”

These words gave his disciples the courage to rise to action. From then on, whenever they heard people criticizing the Buddha, they would resolutely speak out. They talked and talked until they were able to convince their opponents of Shakyamuni’s true intent. This is what it means to refute people’s erroneous views and lead them to the correct teaching. Eventually, the slanderous remarks ceased completely.

When Devadatta revealed his real nature by trying to seize control of the Buddhist order, Shakyamuni immediately told Shariputra and his other disciples to go to Rajagriha and expose Devadatta for the scoundrel that he was. It was thus that Shakyamuni staunchly challenged all wrongdoing. He clearly distinguished right from wrong, his words piercing injustice like bullets.

The Daishonin’s life was also a constant fierce struggle to communicate the truth. Establishing his teachings at the age of 32, he stood alone and pointed out the errors of all the Buddhist schools of Japan at the time. He was not a person of rank or status, but he had no fear of the powerful military government. He knew that enemies would set upon him from all over Japan, and was prepared for intense persecution.

His words were a lion’s roar to relieve the people of suffering, bring them happiness, and build a peaceful and prosperous society. That is why his life was a series of endless persecutions.

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