

The Human Revolution Vol. XII By Ho Goku

The Human Revolution is a novel based on fact, written by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda under the pen name Ho Goku. It recounts the early days of the Soka Gakkai in Japan under the second president, Josei Toda, President Ikeda's mentor. The character of Shin'ichi Yamamoto represents Daisaku Ikeda. The theme of the novel is summed up in the foreword, as the author writes,

"A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind." The following is an excerpt from "New Dawn" chapter, volume twelve.

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SHIN'ICHI now felt as if his inescapable destiny were raging like a storm in his heart. Emotions arising from an awareness of his heavy mission surged turbulently within him. It seemed as though his very life was being firmly and fiercely bound by the thick, invisible fetters of his karma.

No matter how many times he refused the presidency, was it not an unavoidable eventuality? In his heart, he appealed to President Toda, wondering if he might not be allowed some sort of reprieve. Agonizing over what to do, he sensed that it was the Buddha's will for him to become president. Yet when he thought of actually assuming that responsibility, he felt indescribable pressure. He wondered whether, in his weakened physical state, he could really mount the kind of struggle that would be required. He knew the power of the Gohonzon was infinite and unfathomable. Was there no choice, then, but to simply leave everything to the Gohonzon and earnestly devote himself to leadership so long as he might survive?

On the morning of April 14, Shin'ichi set off from home for the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, his feet heavy.

There, in one of the small conference rooms, he met with General Director Takeo Konishi and directors Koichi Harayama, Hisao Seki and Katsu Kiyohara.

Konishi earnestly restated how fervently everyone wished for Shin'ichi to accept the presidency. It was clear from his tone that he was unwilling to take "no" for an answer.

"President Toda," Konishi said, "deeply regretted that during the period he had declined to take the presidency, erroneous teachings spread like wildfire throughout Japan. Similarly, your turning down the presidency will only delay kosen-rufu. Is that what you want?"

Shin'ichi didn't know what to say. He could not argue with Konishi's point.

"I'm sure you are aware that President Toda himself wanted you to become the third president, that he resolved in his heart to make this so and devoted himself to training you for that purpose. We, too, know that this was Mr. Toda's wish. Your becoming president is something that all our leaders are seeking, out of their sincere desire to accomplish kosen-rufu. Please accept the presidency."

Shin'ichi ultimately had no choice. He had to agree.

"If this is how strongly you all feel, then...."

The moment he uttered these words, the light came back into Konishi's eyes.

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“You’ll accept, then? Thank you very much,” the general director said. “Now the Gakkai can make great progress. The members will be overjoyed.” Beaming, he bowed deeply to Shin’ichi to convey his appreciation.

The clock indicated 10:10 in the morning.

It couldn’t be helped; there was no way to avoid it, Shin’ichi told himself. President Toda had raised him as his direct disciple; he had rigorously trained and taught him. What was there to fear? The time had come at last to repay his debt of gratitude to his mentor. There was nothing left for him to do but to advance with youthful courage and dignity toward the awesome challenges that lay ahead.

Shin’ichi would now officially command the helm of the movement to spread the Law. The young lion had arisen.

One of the directors hurried off to convey the news to the other leaders and staff in the building and an excited cheer went up outside the room. Directors and staff exchanged handshakes, sharing their unbridled delight. Konishi clasped Shin’ichi’s hand, his eyes brimming with tears.

On the evening of April 19, an emergency nationwide leaders meeting convened at the Gakkai Headquarters. There, Shin’ichi’s appointment as the Soka Gakkai’s third president was officially announced. Thunderous cheers and applause filled the meeting room and the entire Headquarters rocked like a ship sailing through surging waves of joy.

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NOW, the baton of kosen-rufu had finally passed in form and in function from the mentor, Josei Toda, to his direct disciple, Shin’ichi Yamamoto.

Shin’ichi deeply sensed that this was the mission he had pledged to fulfill in the remote past, what he had been meant to dedicate his youth and his entire life to.

With a touch of nostalgia, he recalled all that had passed since that summer of 1947, when as a young man of 19 he had encountered Buddhism and become a disciple of Josei Toda. He also remembered the day in January 1949 when he started work at Toda’s publishing company, Nihon Shogakkan, as an editor of a children’s magazine, fulfilling a cherished dream to work and challenge himself under Toda’s tutelage.

But before long, Toda’s publishing business had run aground, the magazine folded, and his other newly launched enterprises were not doing as well as expected. The company fell behind in paying its wages. Because of this dire financial situation, Shin’ichi gave up the idea of going back to night school to complete his education. The other Gakkai members who worked at the company, meanwhile, began to resent Toda and to leave him one after another. This marked the start of Shin’ichi’s bitter struggle against a daunting onslaught of obstacles.

Toda stepped down from his position as Soka Gakkai general director, not wanting his personal business failures to compromise the organization in any way. The resignation took place on precisely the third anniversary of Shin’ichi’s joining the Soka Gakkai. In the midst of these troubles, Shin’ichi had made a personal pledge: “No matter what kind of hardships may beset me in the future, for as long as I live I will always regard the honor of having Mr. Toda as my mentor as my greatest happiness and joy in life.”

Shin’ichi desperately devoted himself to protecting, supporting and serving Toda. Afflicted by tuberculosis, tormented by fever and sometimes even coughing up blood, he continued to fight, prepared to give his life in the process. He devoted his entire

being to Toda, working alongside his mentor in their sublime struggle to spread the Law. He was resolved to die fighting for kosen-rufu while Toda was still alive. Otherwise, he felt, he would be unable to serve as a model of a true disciple—as a modern example of a follower of the Daishonin—for the generations to come.

Perceiving Shin'ichi's almost tragic earnestness, Toda had told him:

You're trying to kill yourself, aren't you? You've decided to give me your life. But I won't have it! You must live—live out your life to the fullest. I will give you my life so that you may do so.

When Shin'ichi considered that he had managed to survive to the age of 32 and was now to lead the kosen-rufu movement as Soka Gakkai president, he could not help feeling that his late mentor had indeed given him his life.

His mentor had thoroughly tutored and trained him, given him the supreme treasure of faith, and taught him to live for the highest mission—for kosen-rufu; he had even given him his very life. Shin'ichi could not hold back his tears at the thought of how fortunate he was to have had such a mentor and how deeply indebted he was to him. He made a heartfelt pledge:

My future is decided. I will repay my great debt of gratitude to President Toda and dedicate my entire life and being to accomplishing his cherished dream, kosen-rufu. I will protect the members, Sensei's children. I will do so until the last moment of my life.

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SHIN'ICHI Yamamoto felt deep joy and pride in living as a disciple of President Toda. The way of mentor and disciple—this was the noble path he had walked in his youth.

Many in contemporary Japan, however, viewed the term *mentor and disciple* as an anachronistic relic of feudal times. Yet a teacher or mentor is vital in mastering any field. This is all the more true when it comes to understanding the law of life propounded in Buddhism. Indispensable to this endeavor is a teacher with a profound grasp of this law who can inspire and encourage us in our Buddhist practice.

It takes a human being to raise and foster another human being.

The mentor and disciple relationship had been a core element of Buddhism from its earliest days. Buddhist practice has its origins in those who decided on their own accord to embrace the Buddha, Shakyamuni, as their mentor, following him and listening to him preach the Law he had become enlightened to within his own life.

The mentor-disciple relationship of Buddhism is different from any societal system or contract. It is always based on the free and spontaneous will of the individual, an expression of that person's seeking spirit. It has nothing to do with personal gain or self-interest. It is a spiritual bond of the purest kind, arising from a desire to pursue a life dedicated to the highest truth. Because of this, the bond of mentor and disciple is as strong and imperishable as a diamond.

Shin'ichi had looked up to Toda as a mentor and earnestly followed him, but not because Toda or anyone else had asked him to do so. It came out of a personal commitment: He had vowed to become Josei Toda's disciple because he was convinced that there was no other leader genuinely committed to realizing kosen-rufu or who

embodied Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism as Toda did.

The martyrdom of first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and the profound awakening in prison of his disciple, Josei Toda, represent the key elements that have shaped the Soka Gakkai's direction.

At a time when the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu, fearing oppression from the wartime military government, enshrined a Shinto talisman in transgression of Nikko Shonin's admonitions against slander, Makiguchi stood up resolutely to preserve and uphold the purity of the Daishonin's Buddhism. He then remonstrated with the leaders of the nation in accord with the instructions of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. He fought oppression, was arrested and died while in prison. Mr. Makiguchi most certainly read the Lotus Sutra with his life and carried out the practice of a Thus Come One—of a Buddha.

His martyrdom was proof of his selfless dedication to propagating the Law even at the cost of his life and a clear indication that he had inherited Nichiren Daishonin's spirit. As a result, the lifeblood of the True Law, then on the brink of perishing amid the darkness of a society defiled by the "five impurities," was preserved. In this way, the Gakkai became directly connected to the Daishonin, thus carrying on the heritage of faith.

Toda, who had chosen Makiguchi for his mentor and had supported and served him, also accompanied him to prison. The profound joy of offering his life as an ordinary mortal for the sake of the Law and of reading the Lotus Sutra with his life coursed through his being.

After chanting daimoku continually in his prison cell, Toda came to the awakening that "the Buddha" means "life itself." At that moment, the difficult teachings of Buddhism were revived in modern times as a living philosophy capable of enabling all people to achieve human revolution.

As he continued to chant, Toda eventually attained a wondrous state of life. He felt himself seated with his palms pressed together in reverence before a glowing, golden Dai-Gohonzon, participating directly in the Ceremony in the Air depicted in the Lotus Sutra. This was the ceremony at which the Daishonin, as Bodhisattva Superior Practices (Jp. Jogyo), leader of the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth, was entrusted by Shakyamuni Buddha with the propagation of the Law after his passing.

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AS a deep inner joy and delight deriving from the Law welled up inside him, Josei Toda perceived that, as disciples of Nichiren Daishonin, he and his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, were Bodhisattvas of the Earth who had been entrusted with the mission to spread the Mystic Law in the Latter Day. The true purpose of a Bodhisattva of the Earth is to accomplish kosen-rufu. Toda now profoundly understood the mission he had possessed since the remote past and which was the reason he had been born in this world.

"I now know what I must do," Toda had thought. "I will never forget this day! I will spend the rest of my life spreading this wondrous Law!"

This was the essence of Toda's enlightenment in prison, the driving force for his subsequent great achievements.

As a result of his deep awakening, Toda personally perceived within his own life the truth of the statement in the Daishonin's "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" that "the assembly at Eagle Peak has not yet dispersed" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p.

757).

When he thought of how he had been able to reach this profound awakening as a result of following his mentor and encountering great persecution for their beliefs, he was filled with a sense of wonder. He also realized that the bond of mentor and disciple he shared with Makiguchi was an eternal one, existing since the remote past as implied by the passage from "The Parable of the Phantom City" chapter of the Lotus Sutra: "those persons who had heard the Law / dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, / constantly reborn in company with their teachers" (LS7, 140).

However, around that same time, as the frosty chill of autumn descended on Tokyo, Toda's mentor drew his last breath in the prison infirmary.

Later, at the third memorial service for Mr. Makiguchi (commemorating the second anniversary of his death), Toda had turned to his mentor's photograph on display before the altar and addressed him in tears as he fought back sobs of emotion:

In your vast and boundless compassion, you let me accompany you even to prison. As a result, I could read with my entire being the passage from the Lotus Sutra, "those persons who had heard the Law / dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, / constantly reborn in company with their teachers." The benefit of this was coming to know the essential purpose of a Bodhisattva of the Earth, and to absorb with my very life even a small degree of the sutra's meaning. Could there be any greater happiness than this?

The mentor, Makiguchi, had passed away in prison, leaving as a legacy his supreme spirit to spread the Law even at the cost of his life. The disciple, Toda, had survived to inherit that spirit and, upon his release from prison, rose alone to the challenge of accomplishing kosen-rufu. The Soka Gakkai spirit was to be found in this united and inseparable struggle of mentor and disciple, a struggle transcending life and death.

What enabled Toda and Makiguchi to attain this state of oneness? It was their powerful, deep-seated resolution in faith, their determination to offer their lives for kosen-rufu—the decree of their original mentor, Nichiren Daishonin.

Deep in his life, Shin'ichi Yamamoto felt that neither kosen-rufu, happiness for all people, nor world peace would be possible without a teacher like Josei Toda. In fact, Nichiren Daishonin's spirit had been inherited by just one person—Josei Toda, President Makiguchi's disciple. In the depths of his life, in his innermost resolve, had resided the vision for kosen-rufu's future development.

A Buddha is not a fantastic other-worldly being. Buddhas cannot exist apart from the people. A person who spreads the Law is an emissary of the Buddha. And to protect and support such a person is to staunchly protect Buddhism. That is why Shin'ichi had tenaciously served and protected Toda, his mentor. And it was through this intense struggle—in which he exerted a hundred million of eons of effort in each single moment of life—that he had brought his own mission and capability to blossom. In this way, he had absorbed and embodied Toda's spirit and was approaching the same state of life his mentor had attained.

(To be continued)