

The New Human Revolution, Volume 5, Chapter 4
Lion
BY HO GOKU – ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Translation of parts 19–21 of the ‘Lion’ chapter, as printed in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper. Ho Goku is the pen name of Daisaku Ikeda, who appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1962.

The Komei Political Federation officially registered as a political organization at the end of November 1961. Its members had waited until the Diet reconvened in the new year to make their official announcement at the press conference on Jan. 7.

After outlining the fundamental principles and basic platform of the organization, Hisao Seki fielded reporters’ questions.

One reporter asked: “The Soka Gakkai has announced that it will back candidates in this year’s elections for the Upper House. Will these guiding principles and policy positions apply only for these elections?”

“No,” Seki replied, “the Komei Political Federation will continue its work based on these principles and policies from here on.”

Another reporter asked, “One of your platform positions is the preservation of the Japanese Constitution, but does your support apply to all provisions of the constitution?”

“Of course,” answered Seki. The reporters looked at each other with puzzled expressions.

Another asked: “If you support all the provisions of the constitution, then you must also support the freedom of religion. Yet in one of your fundamental principles, you state that your politics ‘are founded in Nichiren Daishonin’s spirit of *rissho ankoku* — the realization of a peaceful and prosperous society based on Buddhist ideals.’

“Nichiren rejected and aggressively refuted other religions with his practice of *shakubuku*, as does the Soka Gakkai. Isn’t it a contradiction to say that the Komei Political Federation supports freedom of religion?”

Shin’ichi Yamamoto’s warning flashed through Seki’s mind as he set out to earnestly reply to the reporter’s charge.

“It is true,” he said, “that the Gakkai practices *shakubuku* — propagation activities to correct erroneous religious views. But that by no means contradicts the freedom of religion as guaranteed by the Japanese Constitution.

“*Shakubuku* means sharing one’s personal religious convictions with others, propagating one’s beliefs, through dialogue. It is founded on mutual understanding and empathy. In other words, our propagation activities depend on the guarantees of religious freedom and freedom of speech.

“While the Soka Gakkai does indeed insist that Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism is a supreme and unparalleled teaching, that is only natural.

“It would be irresponsible to propagate a religion that one did not believe was the very best. Both Christians and Muslims believe that theirs is the highest religion.

“Such conviction is the very lifeblood of religion, and in it exists the pride and conscience of people of faith.”

Prejudice and misunderstanding about religion underlay the reporters’ questions. Another reporter asked, “Excuse my bluntness, but is or is not the Soka Gakkai planning to use the Komei Political Federation to make Nichiren Shoshu the national religion of Japan?”

“Definitely not,” Seki shot back.

Religion, by its very nature, is a most personal matter — a function of an individual's deep inner volition. It is impossible to foster genuine religious faith through coercion or external pressure such as might be imposed by the state. If the Daishonin's Buddhism were to become a "national religion," this would invite its decline — the fossilization and extinction of the founder's spirit.

Another reporter asked with a sarcastic smirk, "You mention fair, honest elections as one of your basic policy positions, but can forcing people to vote for Soka Gakkai candidates, calling it *shakubuku*, be fair and honest?"

Seki retorted, "When and where has the Soka Gakkai ever forced anyone to vote for a candidate in the name of *shakubuku*?"

Silence.

"I'd appreciate it if you would refrain from making statements not based on investigation, but only on your personal prejudice and wild conjecture," he said. The question had exposed the reporter's complete ignorance regarding the Gakkai.

The press conference soon ended, but very few newspapers announced the formation of the Komei Political Federation. Only one or two bothered to report it and then only with a brief paragraph.

That night Shin'ichi Yamamoto received a detailed account of the press conference from Seki and the others. Most of the reporters had arbitrarily surmised that the Soka Gakkai drove its members to turn out votes for Gakkai-sponsored candidates without regard for the individuals' wishes — simply so that it could make Nichiren Shoshu the national religion and gain control of the Japanese government. The reporters based their supposition on the fact that Josei Toda in the past had referred to the establishment of a "national high sanctuary" in describing the process of achieving kosen-rufu.

In Buddhism, the word *sanctuary* generally refers to a place where the ceremony to confer the Buddhist precepts is held — an ordination platform. The first Buddhist ordination platform in Japan was established by the Chinese monk Chien-chen (Jpn Ganjin; 688–763) who built a Hinayana ordination platform at Todai-ji temple in the city of Nara, then Japan's capital. In the ensuing Heian period, Saicho (also known as the Great Teacher Dengyo; 767–822) devoted himself to establishing a Mahayana ordination platform at Enryaku-ji temple on Mount Hiei. His efforts bore fruit when the platform was finally built after his death.

But even the Mahayana ordination platform at Enryaku-ji was a sanctuary dedicated to the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. As yet there was no sanctuary devoted to the core of the Buddhist teachings, the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Daishonin entrusted his disciples of future generations to establish the high sanctuary of the Three Great Secret Laws implicit in the depths of the essential teaching (second half) of the Lotus Sutra. In his work "On the Three Great Secret Laws,"¹ he states:

With regard to the high sanctuary: When the law of the ruler fuses with the principles of Buddhism, and when the principles of Buddhism merge with the law of the ruler, and both the ruler and his subjects all uphold the Law of the three secrets of the essential teaching [of the Lotus Sutra, i.e., Nam-myoho-renge-kyo], and when the ancient example of King Possessor of Virtue and the monk Realization of Virtue² is transposed to a future time in the defiled age of the Latter Day of the Law, you should, after securing an imperial decree and a shogunal directive, find the finest place resembling the pure land of Eagle Peak and there construct the high sanctuary. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1022)

It was Chigaku Tanaka (1861–1939) who first used the term *national high sanctuary* to describe the high sanctuary mentioned by the Daishonin in "On the Three Great Secret

Laws.” Tanaka was originally a priest of the Minobu school of Nichiren Buddhism, but left it during the Meiji Period (1868– 1912) to found the Rissho Ankoku Association (later the National Pillar Society). Though Tanaka’s ideas emerged against a backdrop of rising nationalistic sentiment throughout Japan, they were extremely chauvinistic even for that time.

And while he did refer to the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, he employed them as a tool to trumpet his own brand of ultranationalism, distorting the Gosho to support the basic principles of national polity (*kokutai*).³

As a result, he directly linked “the law of the ruler” in the above-quoted passage to the Japanese nation, designating it the Land of the Gods, and set about incorporating everything else into this paradigm. He also loudly proclaimed the Lotus Sutra to be the teaching by which the world could be consolidated into a single empire — and that Japan was the nation to bring about that consolidation.

He interpreted the phrase “When the law of the ruler fuses with the principles of Buddhism” as meaning “When Buddhism becomes the spiritual foundation of the nation as a matter of state policy.” He read “When the principles of Buddhism merge with the law of the ruler” as indicating “When the state directly becomes the body of Buddhism” through nationalizing Buddhism as a central philosophy for preserving Japan’s unique national polity and for creating a single global empire under Japan’s control.⁴

Furthermore, his comments on the phrase “The ancient example of King Possessor of Virtue and the monk Realization of Virtue...” exhibited a new level of nationalistic fervor. King Possessor of Virtue and the monk Realization of Virtue are figures that appear in the Nirvana Sutra. Realization of Virtue battles with monks who violate the Buddhist precepts and fights to preserve the True Law, while King Possessor of Virtue defends him with his life. Tanaka twisted this passage to mean “Protecting the Law with the power of state authority and realizing world unification in accord with the way of righteousness, even if it meant punishing those nations not willing to comply.”⁵ In other words, Tanaka actively endorsed using military force in Japan’s drive for world domination.

According to Chigaku Tanaka, Mount Fuji, Japan’s most famous and distinctive mountain, was the “finest place resembling the pure land of Eagle Peak” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1022) where the high sanctuary should be built. From the late 19th century into the first decades of the 20th century (during the Taisho and early Showa eras), there was considerable debate and discussion among various Nichiren schools and splinter groups — particularly among members of the National Pillar Society — concerning this idea of Mount Fuji as the location of the high sanctuary. Eventually these discussions even extended to the question of which Gohonzon was appropriate to be enshrined in the high sanctuary, with attacks being made on the orthodoxy of the Dai-Gohonzon at Taiseki-ji. This drew Nichiren Shoshu into the debate.

In their rebuttals, representatives of Nichiren Shoshu employed the term *national high sanctuary*, which their adversaries had used, making it seem that Nichiren Shoshu also accepted this premise. As a rising tide of militarism swept Japan, Nichiren Shoshu itself took on more nationalist leanings, until eventually it accepted the idea of a national high sanctuary as natural and inevitable. Further, Nichiren Shoshu continued to use this expression after the war to refer to the high sanctuary of true Buddhism. That is why Josei Toda, a lay follower of Nichiren Shoshu, also used the term *national high sanctuary* when talking about the high sanctuary of true Buddhism.

But in no way was it Toda’s desire to simply construct the high sanctuary and then make it some sort of national shrine. Knowing that Nichiren Daishonin’s supreme wish was for the happiness of the people, he viewed the construction of the high sanctuary as a symbol

of kosen-rufu, the real means to achieve that happiness. That is why he devoted all his time and energy to increasing the Soka Gakkai's membership to 750,000 households and building a firm basis for the spread of the Daishonin's teachings. He knew that each individual's strong faith was the key if all were to realize happiness.

At the 4th general meeting of Yokohama's Tsurumi Chapter in March 1955, Toda clarified his position on the issue:

I heard several years ago of a certain priest at the head temple remarking in the most matter-of-fact tone as he sat nonchalantly smoking a cigarette, "Right now the head temple is destitute as you can see, but when kosen-rufu is achieved, the emperor will build us a temple and we will be great." I don't have to tell you how astounded I was to hear this.

Suppose kosen-rufu is achieved. An imperial decree and a shogunal directive are granted, announcing the head temple as the center of kosen-rufu, and the Dai-Gohonzon is reverently put on display in the future Grand Reception Hall. But who will communicate the great benefit of the Dai-Gohonzon to all Japan? We will have a situation where many without faith will visit the head temple. Lacking in faith, can you imagine how disrespectfully they will treat the Gohonzon?⁶

As Josei Toda made clear in his guidance at the Tsurumi Chapter general meeting, he was keenly aware that even a national high sanctuary would be meaningless unless people actually had faith in the True Law. Without that, genuine happiness for all and prosperity of the nation would be impossible. If anything, he feared that the creation of a national high sanctuary without this basis might undermine and diminish people's faith — that the Daishonin's Buddhism would just devolve into empty ritual.

At the time, Nichiren Shoshu based its belief that the high sanctuary should be established by the state on the phrase from the Goshō that read "Securing an imperial decree and a shogunal directive" (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 1022). An "imperial decree," of course, was a document expressing the emperor's command, and a "shogunal directive" referred to a document issued by the regent to convey the words of the shogun, or generalissimo, the head of the military government that ruled from Kamakura in the Daishonin's time. But in the present, the emperor was no more than a symbol, and Japan was no longer ruled by a shogun or regent. Sovereignty now rested with the people — the people were the rulers of this democratic society.

Toda gave long and serious thought to how they should regard this Goshō passage referring to "an imperial decree and a shogunal directive" if they were to realize in contemporary times the national high sanctuary Nichiren Shoshu spoke of. It seemed conceivable to him that in an age of democracy, such pronouncements would perhaps more appropriately correspond to a resolution in the Diet, the representative body that expressed the people's will, instead of a decree from the emperor.

But regardless of whether this high sanctuary was a "national" one or not, Toda firmly believed it to be no more than a formality symbolizing the achievement of kosen-rufu, an issue to be addressed in the far distant future. He therefore decided to entrust the establishment of the high sanctuary to his disciples who would inherit his legacy and carry on his mission. He chose to devote his entire being to the problem of how to best interpret and implement the concept of "the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism" because he felt that this was directly connected to the happiness and welfare of the people.

One spring night in 1954, not long after Shin'ichi Yamamoto had become youth division chief of staff, Toda shared his thoughts on this topic with him at the Soka Gakkai

Headquarters in Shinanomachi.

“Shin’ichi, how we interpret the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism will be an extremely important issue in the future,” he said. “If we interpret the law of the ruler directly, it means government by the country’s ruler, but I don’t think it is limited to government alone. It is actually much broader, meaning all secular realms over which government should bear responsibility. In other words, the concept of the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism can be interpreted to indicate not only government, but also economics, education, science and academia, and all cultural pursuits of human civilization.

“Thus, what the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism actually means in practical terms is an extremely important question.”

As youth division chief of staff, Shin’ichi Yamamoto’s responsibility was to carefully consider the direction the Gakkai was taking in all of its endeavors. Josei Toda expected a great deal of Shin’ichi on this score. That is why Toda was so determined to communicate to Shin’ichi his conclusions on the subject of the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism, an issue the Gakkai was certain to confront in the future.

Toda continued, “The concept of the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism most certainly does not mean that government and Buddhism should be institutionally joined. We must consider the meaning of this concept from the perspective of the Daishonin’s complete statement in ‘On the Three Great Secret Laws,’ which is: ‘When the law of the ruler fuses with the principles of Buddhism, and when the principles of Buddhism merge with the law of the ruler.’ The Chinese character for fuse here has the meanings ‘deep,’ ‘profound,’ and ‘recondite.’ In other words, it is completely different from unity of a surface or institutional nature. It means the law of the ruler, or secular affairs, and the principles of Buddhism coming together on a profound level and firmly establishing the spirit and philosophy of Buddhism as the basis of all spheres of human activity. Of course, by this I mean the philosophy and ideals of Buddhism taking root in the heart and mind of each person, for it is people who create society and culture.

“Looking now at the second half of the passage, ‘the principles of Buddhism merge with the law of the ruler,’ I feel this means the spirit of Buddhist philosophy becoming manifest in each individual’s life and behavior, so that secular affairs — that is, society itself — are completely in accord with the way of Buddhism.

“Simply put, Buddhist philosophy teaches that because each person is a Treasure Tower and a child of the Buddha, human life is precious beyond all else and every individual has the right to happiness. It also represents the compassion necessary to help everyone realize this goal of happiness.

“Buddhism is a philosophy of human revolution, through which individuals reveal their inherent Buddhahood and establish an autonomous, creative and indomitable self that can deal with any situation life has to offer. The essential principles of Buddhism can be described as the sanctity of life, the equality of all people, and freedom — all ideals that uphold human rights and make possible the realization of true democracy.

“The guiding principle that the Daishonin espoused for building a sound society lies in establishing these Buddhist principles in the heart of each individual and thereby cultivating and enriching that person’s character. The natural consequence of this is the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism.

“In other words, it is impossible to discuss concepts like the fusion of the law of the ruler and the principles of Buddhism (*obutsu myogo*) and achieving a peaceful and prosperous society through Buddhist ideals (*rissho ankoku*) as something separate from the lives of living individuals. This means that human revolution, which positively transforms the heart

and mind — the very life — of the individual, is most crucial.”

(To be continued)

1. “Sandai Hiho Sho,” written by Nichiren Daishonin in 1282. The Three Great Secret Laws are: 1) the object of worship of true Buddhism, 2) the invocation or daimoku of true Buddhism, and 3) the high sanctuary of true Buddhism.
2. For details of this story, see MW-2 [2nd. ed.], 31.
3. *Kokutai*: Translated variously as the “national polity,” “national entity,” or “national essence.” Refers specifically to the belief that Japan was unique by virtue of its rule by an unbroken imperial line comprising the descendants of the creator gods of Japan.
4. Chigaku Tanaka, *Tanaka Chigaku Sensei Kojutsu* (Lectures of Tanaka Chigaku) (Tokyo: Tengyo Mimposha Shuppambu, Inc., 1927), vol. 4, p. 2640.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 268–69.
6. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1984), vol. 4, p. 269.