

The New Human Revolution, Volume 6, Chapter 2
Long Journey
BY HO GOKU – ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Translation of parts 31–36 of the ‘Long Journey’ 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.

Shin’ichi Yamamoto said to Shingo Shiroyama: “It’s a mistake to assume that your children are always going to listen to you just because you’re their parent. Religious belief is a matter of choice.”

“Oh...,” said Shiroyama, looking slightly nonplused to find his expectations of his children misplaced.

“It’s unreasonable to think that your children will understand and accept your faith just because they’re your children. Particularly since they are adults, they will naturally have their own beliefs and values. So you should strive to respect their views and the way they choose to live.

“If, based on such respect, you truly wish to bring them to your faith, the best and only way is through your personal example. You must demonstrate how wonderful this practice is through your life and character. In other words, you must be a father your children can respect and really be proud of.

“You can’t fool your family members. They know you too well. They are your most observant, severe critics. We sometimes see, especially in the women’s division, members who participate energetically and enthusiastically in activities but then complain and criticize their fellow members at home. Of course their children won’t be inspired to join.

“If you truly, sincerely chant for the happiness of your children, your prayer will communicate itself to them — they will eventually awaken to faith. In addition, if you practice hard, your family will be protected by the benefit and good fortune that you accumulate through faith.

“Therefore, there’s no need to worry or rush things. Most important, there’s absolutely no reason to force your faith on your children.”

Shiroyama nodded.

Shin’ichi smiled and continued: “By the way, I’d like you to be one of our contacts here in Pakistan. You’d be responsible for keeping in touch with any members who come to Pakistan from Japan. Will you do it?”

“Yes, gladly,” Shiroyama replied without hesitation.

“We have another men’s division member living in Pakistan, Asanobu Kobayashi, who is in Japan right now but will be returning soon. We are planning to ask him to be a contact along with you.”

Sitting next to Shiroyama was Takako Kawakita, the wife of Masao Kawakita. (He had met them at the airport and shown them around Karachi.) Shin’ichi next turned to her and said: “I saw your mother in Japan just before I began this trip. She’s doing very well. And she’s wondering how you’re doing in Pakistan. She told me that you’re a Soka Gakkai member, too.”

Takako replied to Shin’ichi somewhat tersely: “No, I’m not. I’m not a member. Mother wanted me to join and I went with her to a temple, but I never joined. And I really have no intention of doing so, either.” She seemed fearful that Shin’ichi was going to press her to join. No doubt her mother, worried about her, had spoken to her about Buddhism a number

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of times.

Shin'ichi smiled gently to put her at ease. "That's perfectly all right," he said. "Religion is something everyone has to decide for themselves. Your mother is striving earnestly in her practice and chanting for your happiness. I'm sure her efforts will protect you. She said she is always praying that you will be healthy and free from harm. Please write her often, keep in touch and cherish her. That, in fact, is the spirit of Buddhism.

"Here you are in Pakistan with your husband, which no doubt means that you have an important mission to accomplish. Though you may encounter various hardships living in an unfamiliar place, don't get discouraged. And please support your husband."

She seemed relieved by Shin'ichi's words and, nodding quietly, took out a small package.

"Mr. Yamamoto, I have a favor to ask," she said.

"What is it?" asked Shin'ichi.

"I'd like you to give this to my mother."

It was, she explained, a ring that she had bought for her mother.

"Of course," replied Shin'ichi. "I'm sure she'll be very happy."

The dinner was not unlike a discussion meeting — with many first-time guests in attendance. The Japanese businessmen based in Pakistan, who were not members, asked Shin'ichi question after question about religion and politics. One asked him for advice about his personal life as well. Shin'ichi responded to each question with utmost courtesy and sincerity, encouraging everyone whether members or not. He simply did not divide people into members and non-members. He believed in the humanity common to all, that every person was a potential friend. And so he encouraged whomever he met, with all his heart, to become happy and creative.

Since Buddhism ensures the happiness of the entire human race, Shin'ichi knew that a Buddhist practitioner must pray and act for the happiness of all people.

Shin'ichi spent the morning of Feb. 11, Josei Toda's birthday, in Pakistan. He and his companions were to fly to Bangkok at noon. Since there was still some time before their departure, Masao Kawakita took them to Clifton Beach, a public recreation area. Shin'ichi and the others stood on the long promenade at the water's edge, the deep blue Arabian Sea spreading out before them.

From ancient times, the Arabian Sea had been a major travel route and the setting for much exchange and communication among cultures. It occurred to Shin'ichi that Alexander the Great's eastward expedition had ended in what was now Pakistan. Shin'ichi turned to the young people with him and said: "Alexander the Great made it as far as Pakistan, if my memory serves me. And on his way home after his journey of conquest, he must have seen this same Arabian Sea."

"Really?" Eisuke Akizuki responded. "Then every place we've visited on this trip is linked to Alexander, isn't it? He traveled to Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Greece and Egypt, just as we have. For him to have journeyed this great distance more than 2,000 years ago, winning one victory after another as he made his way from his homeland in Macedonia on the Balkan Peninsula, must have been a truly amazing feat."

Alexander the Great was born in 356 B.C.E., son of the king of Macedonia. Aristotle, the great thinker and disciple of Plato, tutored Alexander as a boy. He acceded to the throne in 336 B.C.E. at the age of 20, two years later going to war with the great Persian Empire in the east. Alexander's parting words when he left on the expedition are well known. He gave all his possessions to his retainers and declared, "All I have left now is hope!"

After defeating the Persians in a preliminary engagement, Alexander liberated Egypt,

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which had been under Persian rule. Then he once again launched an attack on Persia, bringing the ancient empire to its knees after a great battle. But that wasn't the end of his campaign. He traveled through Central Asia, pressing eastward, finally crossing the Indus River and entering the unknown land of India.

Eight years had passed since leaving his homeland. Alexander seemed determined to travel to the very ends of the earth. Then suddenly he stopped in his tracks. He turned and made his way down the Indus and, on reaching the Arabian Sea, hastened back to the familiar lands of the west.

Shin'ichi asked his companions: "In the final phase of his long expedition, Alexander crossed the Indus River. Before him lay the green plains of northern India, nourished by the Ganges. Then he suddenly stopped and turned back. Why?"

Everyone was silent, apparently lost in thought. No one could answer.

After some time, Shin'ichi said: "Alexander was always pressing forward, always in the vanguard, overcoming every obstacle, blazing a trail of victories. I am sure that when he crossed the Indus, his heart beat with excitement and anticipation at discovering yet another unknown land.

"He wasn't forced to turn back because of enemies or obstacles. His soldiers simply refused to go any farther. Alexander knew that his troops had been gradually losing their enthusiasm, so he tried to rouse their fighting spirit, urging them to continue an invincible march forward. But they resisted their leader's call and would not move. Alexander no doubt thought his men cowards and gritted his teeth in anger and frustration. His earnest appeals to them to go on fell on deaf ears. Finally he had to give up his ambition to advance farther eastward."

"They were Alexander's companions in battle, though, who had fought side by side with him, stuck by him through thick and thin," Akira Kuroki pointed out. "Why did they refuse to continue following him?"

"This," Shin'ichi said, "is an important question. After eight long years of traveling, far away from home, they were no doubt beginning to feel homesick. Perhaps they were also simply exhausted, mentally and physically, from so much fighting. But I think their main reason for refusing to follow Alexander farther was that they didn't know what his goal was, what he was fighting for.

"Certainly, Alexander's expedition was originally motivated by a wish to defend, enlarge and enrich his homeland. But soon he came to cherish a greater purpose. If all he sought was treasure, he would have ended his journey with the conquest of Persia and carried its enormous wealth back home. Alexander's defeat of the Persian Empire also assured Macedonia's security — so that could no longer have been his goal, either.

"Yet he continued to press ahead. He never gave in to petty ambitions or lust for power, but rode on at the head of his great expedition. Why? Because he wanted to realize a dream — that of linking East and West and uniting all humanity."

It is said that while in Egypt, Alexander had a revelation that all humankind was one. From that time on, he took as his life's goal making that ideal a reality. Though he used military force to make his conquests, he never looked down on the people of the East or discriminated against them. If his opponents accepted his rule after their defeat in battle, Alexander treated them well, often appointing local aristocrats or leaders as his deputies.

He also made positive efforts to adopt elements of the cultures and customs of the people he conquered. This became the foundation for the emergence of a new culture, contributing to the cross-pollination of Greek civilization and the Buddhist tradition that flourished in

India. This culminated in the flowering of Buddhist art in later centuries in northern India (present-day Pakistan) in Gandhara.¹

At the time, even the great philosopher Aristotle believed that non-Greeks were barbarians. Thus none of Alexander's soldiers could understand his grand ideal of uniting the world or his conviction that all people share a common humanity. The soldiers viewed their expedition solely as a means to expand Macedonia's territory and increase their personal wealth. Naturally, after the defeat of Persia, Alexander's followers grew skeptical about the need to suffer further hardship or expose themselves to additional risks and dangers.

"There was a great gap," continued Shin'ichi, "between the goals of Alexander and his followers toward the expedition. Alexander wanted to travel to the most distant lands to realize a lofty dream, while his troops were concerned only with their continued survival and safety.

"Self-interest makes people cowardly. And once cowardice has taken root, the battle is lost.

"The same can be said in the realm of faith. Even when Mr. Toda was alive, there were leaders who, having once conquered such sufferings as illness and poverty, no longer devoted themselves earnestly to Gakkai activities. Feeling they had already received the benefits they had sought and solved their pressing problems, they decided they no longer needed to apply themselves diligently to faith and practice.

"Some even dared to criticize Mr. Toda, who devoted every moment of his life to spreading the Daishonin's teachings. 'Why must we spend so much time propagating Buddhism?' they would ask. 'Why can't we be more relaxed and easygoing about our Gakkai activities?' I heard complaints of this sort again and again. But Mr. Toda's aim was to erase misery from the world, to enable all people to lead happy lives — his aim was to realize lasting peace on this planet. The sad thing was that those members never really understood his intent."

Waves shimmered in the bright sunlight. The young men listened intently as Shin'ichi spoke.

"I am certain that I am the only one who knew Mr. Toda's deepest intentions and made serious efforts to realize his cherished dreams," he continued. "My determination to continue doing so remains unchanged. Mr. Toda entrusted me with full responsibility for kosen-rufu, the realization of humanity's happiness and peace. It is a long, long journey — an endless one, in fact. It is an unremitting struggle that I will set myself to day after day, for as long as I live and breathe.

"Those who think only of their personal security and gain can never travel the long journey of kosen-rufu. That all our members overcome their sufferings, become healthy and enjoy comfortable lives, that they might even live in big, beautiful homes and have a fine place in society, with recognition and respect — these things I wish. And while these are certainly benefits that faith can help us attain, they are small, mediocre, compared to the ultimate benefit of faith. They are but one aspect of why we practice Buddhism.

"All we can gain from such things is relative happiness — that which never reaches beyond oneself. If you settle for this, you will be like Alexander's soldiers who lost the spirit and passion to continue their advance. Our ultimate goal, on the individual level, is to achieve absolute happiness, to establish an indestructible palace of life in our hearts, one that will never crumble, no matter what adversity we face.

"Our true goal is kosen-rufu, the happiness of both ourselves and others. We have been born in this world to carry out this mission. It is in dedicating our lives to this task that we

find unsurpassed joy, immeasurable fulfillment and absolute happiness.

“But the older people get and the more material security they acquire, the more self-protective and timid they become. Though many make valiant efforts when they are young, few can sustain such commitment throughout their lives. If our efforts wane, we cannot hope to perfect ourselves or realize peace and happiness for all humanity. In addition, all our hard work in the past will be rendered meaningless if we give up halfway. That is why I insist so strongly on persevering in our struggle for kosen-rufu to the very end.

“Getting back to Alexander’s story, by now his soldiers’ wishes and goals were very different than his. That was the one wall that Alexander could not surmount.

“A leader, no matter how great, can achieve nothing lasting unless others understand and share his or her goals, working with him or her to realize them. True comrades, true disciples, are linked throughout life by a shared aspiration.”

(To be continued)

1. Gandhara: a district in northern India that was a crossroads in ancient times for the cultures of India, Central Asia and the Middle East. A center of a unique style of art inspired by Greco–Roman influences and Indian tradition based on Buddhism. Gandhara art reached its zenith between the 1st century B.C.E. and the 3rd century C.E.

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