

The New Human Revolution, Volume 6, Chapter 2
Long Journey
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Translation of parts 37–41 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.

Gazing out over the Arabian Sea and far into the distance, Shin’ichi Yamamoto thought of his mentor, Josei Toda. If he were still alive, Shin’ichi realized, he would be 62 today. If he were standing here with Shin’ichi, what would he say? Toda, who had always prayed for the happiness of the people of Asia and the world, had died at the age of 58 without ever leaving Japan. Now Shin’ichi was launching into the world in his mentor’s place.

Shin’ichi was well aware that his mission in life was to accomplish his mentor’s cherished hopes, his vision. But he also knew with painful clarity what an incredibly heavy, demanding task that would be — how unimaginably long the journey to achieve it would be. Soka Gakkai members could as yet be found in only a handful of countries. And even then their numbers were extremely small. There were also some countries members couldn’t even enter, because no diplomatic relations existed with Japan, and others that did not guarantee religious freedom.

In those circumstances, planting in people’s hearts the principles of peace and humanism, based on Buddhist philosophy, and creating bonds of friendship were extraordinarily difficult, time-consuming endeavors. They might have been compared to moving an entire desert by picking up its sands a grain at a time.

Shin’ichi was at times overwhelmed by the scope of the challenge that lay before him. On occasion, he felt a deep sense of anxiety. But he would then recall how his mentor had risen amid the ashes of Japan’s defeat to complete his chosen mission, to build a great castle of happiness by accomplishing a membership of 750,000 households. Whenever Shin’ichi thought of that, courage and strength welled up in his heart like the sun breaking through dark clouds. As Toda’s disciple, he would carry out his mission just as resolutely as his mentor had. His courage became hope and then deep, certain conviction, until his heart called out, “Watch me, Sensei!” Rousing his courage with memories of his mentor, Shin’ichi would continue on his journey.

The solemn vow he had made as a disciple also became a driving force behind the subsequent great activities for peace promoted by the SGI throughout the world, as well as the many bonds of friendship and trust created through dialogue with leaders from all fields, from nations across the globe.

Now Soka Gakkai chapters were about to be established in Thailand and Hong Kong — places that Shin’ichi had visited for the first time the year before, establishing a district in each.

Shin’ichi and his party left Karachi at noon on a flight to Bangkok by way of New Delhi, arriving at about 7:30 p.m. Together with the 15-or-so local members who had greeted them at the airport, they made their way to their hotel. There, they held a discussion meeting where Shin’ichi announced the formation of Bangkok Chapter.

“By coincidence, today is Feb. 11, President Toda’s birthday,” he began. “Last year marked the first time I celebrated his birthday since becoming third president of the Soka Gakkai. If you remember, I was in Bangkok that time as well. From here, I traveled to Cambodia. Now I am in Bangkok on this important day the second time in a row. I can’t

help thinking that I have some profound karmic link with this city.

“On this auspicious day, I want to establish in Bangkok the very first Soka Gakkai chapter in Asia outside Japan. What do you think?”

The members looked at Shin’ichi with surprise, which soon turned to rapturous applause and beaming smiles.

“All right, then,” he went on. “With your unanimous agreement, Bangkok Chapter is hereby established. Not only is it our first chapter in Asia outside Japan, it is the smallest chapter in the world with only 30-some member households. This means that of all our chapters around the world, it has the greatest potential for growth!

“Mr. Toda once composed this poem:

*To the people of Asia
Who pray for a glimpse of the moon
Through the parting clouds,
Let us send them, instead,
The light of the sun.*

“Thailand is destined to be an important center from which the light of happiness will shine on all Asia, a lighthouse illuminating the way for its many peoples. Please strive your hardest to realize that dream.

“For my part, I will support and encourage you with all my strength through the years to come so that you can engage freely, confidently in activities to bring happiness to all your friends. I hope you will burn with the pride of true pioneers and make this land a model of happiness for all.”

Listening to Shin’ichi, the members began to realize what a profound mission they had to be living in Thailand.

Shin’ichi announced leadership appointments for the new chapter. He designated Seizo Tsukiji, a Japanese men’s division member stationed in Thailand on business, as chapter chief and Ann Miyako Raiz as chapter women’s division chief. At the same time, a young men’s division was established. Everyone showed their approval of the appointments with a warm round of applause.

The seed of kosen-rufu planted here a year ago had now sprouted into a new chapter. The new Bangkok Chapter women’s division chief, Mrs. Raiz, was unable to attend the inaugural meeting — she was in the hospital, having just given birth.

“Could you please go see Mrs. Raiz in the hospital and give her a small gift on my behalf?” Shin’ichi asked Eisuke Akizuki when the meeting was over. “Please also give her the following message: ‘Congratulations on the birth of your baby! And congratulations, too, on your appointment as chapter women’s division chief. I’m afraid there will be lots of work, but please do your best. Please support and encourage our precious members, children of the Buddha one and all. Take very good care of your health and let’s meet again in Japan soon.’

“I am sure no one is more delighted than she that we’ve established a chapter here. On the other hand, not being able to attend today’s meeting where it was announced must have been very disappointing. So she is the one I most want to encourage right now.

“Anyone can set up a chapter. But that by itself is meaningless. What really counts is whether that serves as an inspiration for everyone, including the leaders, to advance with fresh commitment in their journey of faith. The crucial thing is not the organization per se, but whether the determination to achieve kosen-rufu is established in the hearts of the members. The way to achieve that establishment is to keep making earnest efforts to

encourage and support each person — to engage, with one’s entire heart and being, in inspiring discussions with each.”

Shin’ichi was eager to teach the young leaders that the worth of any organization is ultimately determined by the people who comprise it. When an organization becomes increasingly bureaucratic, it can always be traced to a loss of focus on the individual, a preoccupation with managing the organization for its own sake.

The next morning, Feb. 12, Shin’ichi completed his official business in Thailand. He and his party then caught a noon flight for Tokyo via Hong Kong. They arrived in Hong Kong at 3:30 p.m., where they had a two-hour layover before continuing to Japan. A group of Hong Kong members had gathered on the airport observation deck to greet Shin’ichi and his party. When they saw the group arrive, they began to wave enthusiastically.

Shin’ichi and the others reached the airport lobby, where Ikuyo Oka, Hong Kong District women’s division chief, was waiting for them. It had been a year since their last meeting.

“It’s so good to see you again, President Yamamoto,” she said. “We’ve all been waiting for you.”

Mrs. Oka and the other Hong Kong members had rented a room in the airport complex where they could meet with Shin’ichi. Some 40 members were already seated in chairs arranged in neat rows. When Shin’ichi entered, everyone broke into applause and cheers of welcome.

When Hong Kong District was formed a year before, there had been no more than a dozen or so members. Now around 40 had come to meet Shin’ichi — and this was far from the total membership.

Shin’ichi sat in the chair placed for him at the front of the room and said to Ikuyo Oka: “Look at all these members! You’ve certainly worked hard.”

A men’s division member had been appointed as the district chief, but he was so often out of town on business that activities had been conducted for the most part by Mrs. Oka and other members. Shin’ichi looked steadily around the room at all present and said: “Hong Kong has made great strides forward in the last year. You can claim victory. Thank you. Today, I want to establish a chapter in Hong Kong. What do you think?”

Vigorous applause signaled everyone’s assent and Shin’ichi began to announce the leadership appointments.

“Ikuyo Oka has led activities in Hong Kong so far with great success,” he said. “I want to appoint her as the new chapter chief. Is that all right with you, Mrs. Oka?”

She nodded.

“All right, then,” Shin’ichi said. “Please say a few words to your fellow members.”

Mrs. Oka stood up and made an energetic resolution: “Last year, President Yamamoto established a district here even though we had only a dozen or so members. And now to hear the news that we will become a full-fledged chapter — I am truly overjoyed! I promise you that I will work my hardest for the sake of the happiness of the people of Hong Kong.” With these words, she bowed deeply to the members.

Shin’ichi continued: “I ask Kimie Hirata, who has been a district staff member until now, to accept the post of chapter women’s division chief.”

Ms. Hirata rose and responded, “All right.” Actually, however, she didn’t exactly know what a chapter women’s division chief was. The titles in Japanese all sounded very confusing to her and she assumed that it was a role without much responsibility. That’s why she responded rather casually.

She had first heard about Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism two years before, from a Japanese businessman in Hong Kong; she had joined the Soka Gakkai in Hong Kong.

Though she was very serious and diligent in her faith, she didn't know very much about the organization.

"Please say a few words in acceptance of your new post, Ms. Hirata," Shin'ichi urged, but since she had no idea what the position was she did not know what to say. She just stood there, at a loss for words.

Shin'ichi sensed her confusion. "Ms. Hirata, in Japan it is the women who are the real mainstays of all our chapters," he said. "Since you are going to be conducting activities as chapter women's division chief, the position of highest responsibility for the Hong Kong women's division, you mustn't undertake this lightly. Your degree of determination will decide the future of our Hong Kong movement."

When she heard that, Ms. Hirata was taken aback. Now she was at an even greater loss for what to say or do.

But Shin'ichi smiled and said, "At times like this, just politely say, 'I'll do my best with my limited abilities, and I hope you'll all give me your help and support.'"

With apparent relief, Ms. Hirata repeated Shin'ichi's words and bowed to the members, after which they warmly applauded her.

"Ms. Hirata, I hope you'll remember the words you've just said and stay true to their spirit," Shin'ichi added. "If you do, everything will be just fine." Ms. Hirata repeated the words mentally, committing them to memory: "I'll do my best with my limited abilities, and I hope you'll all give me your help and support."

She thought about the meaning of the words. "I don't have much experience," she said to herself, "and my abilities really are limited. But I can try my best. I'll try to always start by taking action myself and doing my best in whatever challenge I face. If I remember how much I need the support and help of other members, I can carry out my duties, lacking in experience as I may be. That's what Mr. Yamamoto is trying to tell me." At that moment, Ms. Hirata, who had only been a member for two years, engraved in her heart the key to being a genuine Soka Gakkai leader.

Shin'ichi suggested they close the meeting by singing a Soka Gakkai song. Joy at the establishment of Hong Kong Chapter rang in their voices. As they sang, their hearts became one. They were thrilled at the new start they were making together, their enthusiasm bubbling over.

Although they had only met for 30 or 40 minutes, in that short time the groundwork for the great progress of the kosen-rufu movement in Hong Kong had been firmly secured.

Back on the plane, Shin'ichi prayed for the peace of the many countries he had visited on this trip and the happiness of all the members in them. As he did, he thought of what a long journey kosen-rufu was.

Because it was such a long journey, each and every step along the way was tremendously important — it was crucial to keep the flames of unflagging courage and conviction burning, no matter what happened. And finally, because it was such a long journey, the members would have to make their way together, arm in arm, with spirited, joyful unity of purpose.

As he looked out the window, he saw the stars in the night sky shimmering with purity and beauty, as though smiling down at him.

(This concludes "Long Journey," chapter 2, vol. 6, of The New Human Revolution.)

'Treasure Land' Chapter Discussion Questions:

1. In part 16 (June 20, 1997, *World Tribune*), Shin' ichi describes the demeanor of the philosopher Socrates on the day of his death. What points are made about Socrates' conduct? What lessons can we learn from these?
2. In part 18 (June 20, 1997, *World Tribune*), Socrates' disciple Plato is discussed. What was the main focus of Plato's life? What form of government did Plato believe to be the best? What are the concerns Plato had regarding democracy?
3. In parts 22–24 (June 27, 1997, *World Tribune*), what observations does Shin' ichi make concerning the great Egyptian pyramids?
4. In part 25 (June 27, 1997, *World Tribune*), while viewing an exhibit of the treasures of Tutankhamen, Shin' ichi has a dialogue with a German youth. What factors does Shin' ichi say contributed to the decline of the great civilizations?
5. In parts 31–36 (July 18, 1997 *World Tribune*), what does Shin' ichi believe is the main reason that Alexander the Great expanded the Macedonian empire so far? Why did Alexander end his conquests?

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