

The New Human Revolution, Volume 6, Chapter 5
Young Eagles
BY HO GOKU – ILLUSTRATED BY KENICHIRO UCHIDA

Translation of parts 30–31 of the ‘Young Eagles’ 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.

At a Goshō lecture, Shin’ichi Yamamoto reprimands the students for their lack of preparation. One of the leaders has hatched a plan to make the students look more prepared than they are, and Shin’ichi sees right though it.

For the student division participants, the lectures were like a furnace or forge where their lives merged and fused with the life of President Shin’ichi Yamamoto. They were always eager and happy at the prospect of seeing him, but they were also nervous. When they locked gazes with him, they felt he could see right through them, fully aware of what was in their hearts or what state of life they were in.

In fact, Shin’ichi was keenly attuned to their moment-to-moment feelings and thoughts. He had made himself familiar with the personality, thinking and circumstances of each participant. And above all, he had sent daimoku to them every day, praying for their growth and development.

The lecture series for the 2nd class was going well, but as it went on, the members became more relaxed. And in time, they started to grow lazy and complacent toward their preparation for the lectures. The usual pre-sessions were still held, organized by student division leaders under the direction of the division’s senior vice chief, Takao Harayama, who was a graduate of the 1st class. But it was increasingly obvious the participants weren’t studying enough. The student division leaders responsible for organizing and coordinating the lectures could see that if this continued, they would be reprimanded by President Yamamoto.

So it was that one of the leaders hatched a little plan: At the next lecture, all the members would raise their hands enthusiastically when President Yamamoto called on someone to explain a passage of the text — irrespective of whether or not they could describe its significance or meaning. Since this leader would serve as the moderator, he would select only those who had raised their hands the quickest and with the most confidence.

When it came to interpreting the more difficult passages, he would arrange in advance which students to call on. His intention was actually to protect his position, fearing that the members’ lack of study would be exposed, and that he would be held responsible in some way.

When the strategy was put into operation, at first everything seemed to go as planned. Everyone raised their hands, and the students selected by the moderator commented on the passages smoothly and confidently.

When Shin’ichi finished explaining one section, the moderator asked: “All right! Who wants to explain the next section?” Everyone raised their hands, volunteering enthusiastically.

Shin’ichi abruptly stilled their voices, calling out in a sharp tone: “Stop this game! Why on earth are you doing this?” Shin’ichi knew immediately what the plan was and who had dreamed it up.

Some of the members could not understand what Shin’ichi was getting at, simply looking puzzled. But all of them knew that they hadn’t studied enough.

The room went silent. Shin'ichi began to call on the members in the front row, one after another. None of them could read or interpret the passage satisfactorily. Some just sat there, shamefaced and at a loss for words.

Shin'ichi prepared for these lectures with an unequaled seriousness of purpose and commitment. "What a shame it is for student division representatives to stoop to this!" Shin'ichi's voice resounded with anger.

He didn't simply mean that it was a shame that they couldn't sufficiently explain the text — what disturbed and disappointed him so was the mentality of the leader who had tried to manipulate the situation to make himself look good.

But Shin'ichi didn't say much else.

"That's all for today," he announced, closing his Gosho. When the students saw the expression of deep sorrow in his eyes, they were ashamed of the casual attitude they had developed toward the lectures, and that they had neglected to prepare seriously.

The next lecture was completely different, however. Everyone studied hard and prepared carefully. Shin'ichi acted as if nothing had happened. He smiled at everyone, and went on with his lecture in a pleasant tone.

Beginning with the first lecture, held in late August 1962, this lecture series on "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" allowed Shin'ichi to personally foster and educate the next generation of Soka Gakkai leaders.

Shin'ichi often told the members: "For 10 years, I thoroughly studied and learned the principles of kosen-rufu under Mr. Toda's tutelage. The mentor provides the principles, and the disciple puts them into practice.

"In the future, I want you to make enormous progress in kosen-rufu, building tens and hundreds of times on the foundation that I have established. I am a stepping stone for you. Our goal is the happiness of all people and world peace."

Shin'ichi always saw to it that there were snacks or a meal for the students after the lectures, and he never forgot to set aside time to warmly interact with them, offering words of personal encouragement. Sometimes he sternly rebuked them, but that, too, was an expression of his deep compassion. He would at times stand before the shoe rack at the entrance, and when he noticed a pair of shoes with worn-out soles would later purchase and present the owner with a new pair.

The lectures allowed the members to know their young Buddhist leader as a human being. They also became acquainted with the brilliance of humanity that emanates from the life of one who lives and breathes the principles of Buddhism.

Shin'ichi was a model to them, and a clear image of him as a mentor in life gradually formed within them. This relationship between mentor and disciples, who were working together for the highest, grandest goal of all, kosen-rufu, was founded on a spirit of warm sharing and mutual inspiration. The lectures became a rare forum of humanistic education for nurturing a new generation of talented leaders.

(To be continued)