

SGI President Ikeda's Essay
Where There's a Will, There's a Way
By HO GOKU

SGI President Ikeda shares the experience of Ken'ichiro Uchida — how he became a successful artist through his great willpower. As illustrator for 'The New Human Revolution,' Uchida's determination is to record the golden history of the Soka Gakkai. 'We are all artists,' President Ikeda explains. 'Great artists of kosen-rufu.'

To date, I have written more than 1,300 installments of *The New Human Revolution*. The illustrations to the unfolding novel have been very well received. Ken'ichiro Uchida, the illustrator, is 50; he paints in the Western style, as does his wife, Fumiko.

I asked Mr. Uchida to illustrate this essay series as well [in the *Seikyo Shimbun*], and it seems that his wife has helped him a great deal in making these illustrations different in feeling from those he is creating for *The New Human Revolution*. Mr. Uchida's style is rather abstract, but his illustrations for the novel are realistic.

The reason for this, he explained, is that *The New Human Revolution* begins in the 1960s, a period very different from the present in many respects. The streets, the stores and houses, people's clothing and other aspects of daily life have changed considerably since then. Many of today's younger readers hadn't even been born yet.

Mr. Uchida felt that for readers to gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the narrative, he needed to depict each installment's setting and background details as accurately and completely as possible. To do that, he decided to adopt an easily accessible, highly realistic style, capturing ordinary, everyday items such as street advertisements or table ornaments with painstaking clarity and detail.

He also chose to use pencil rather than pen. He believed that the softer, subtler lines of pencil sketches were ideal for depicting the warmth and friendship of the Soka Gakkai portrayed in the novel.



Mr. Uchida, born into a Soka Gakkai family, grew up in Kokura, Fukuoka Prefecture. His mother passed away when he was in his last year of junior high. Her love for paintings rubbed off on him, and he aspired to become an artist.

The first installment of *The Human Revolution* was published in the Jan. 1, 1965, *Seikyo Shimbun*, the year he entered high school. When he saw the illustrations, he wished that he might one day become an artist accomplished enough to illustrate such a novel. A dream took root in his youthful heart.

He went to Tokyo and took the entrance exam for the Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music but didn't pass. He returned to Kokura, where he found a job in a company.

But he never abandoned his dream of becoming an artist. He went to Tokyo again at age 27 and began to study painting on his own. Taking a job to support himself, he painted in his spare time and eventually began to win awards in national exhibitions. He twice won the top prize in the Western-style painting division of The Third Civilization Exhibition.



When it was decided to publish *The New Human Revolution* in installments in the *Seikyo Shimbun*, the editorial department had a difficult time deciding whom to ask to contribute

the illustrations. There were dozens of candidates.

Although Mr. Uchida was not a well-known painter, his work overflowed with the Gakkai spirit. Finally, he was selected. I had great faith in the promising potential he showed.

As the saying goes, where there's a will, there's a way.



Soon after Mr. Uchida was chosen to illustrate *The New Human Revolution*, he presented me with one of his oil paintings, *Launching an Age of Great Voyages for Peace*. It depicts me standing in front of the statue of Christopher Columbus on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco during my first visit to the United States.

Mr. Uchida said that the painting came from his ardent wish to record the golden history of the Soka Gakkai. I appreciated his sincere gesture and designated his gift an important treasure of the Soka Gakkai.

I composed a poem for Mr. Uchida and inscribed it on the opening leaf of one of my collections of photographs, which I then presented to him:

*Throughout eternity
Together
Artist and writer*



Prior to *The New Human Revolution*, Mr. Uchida had never done this kind of illustration. At first, he sometimes had to redraw a single illustration as many as 20 times before he was satisfied with the result. Even now, he spends an average of seven to eight hours drawing each illustration. I deeply appreciate the earnest effort he makes to illustrate the novel, searching for the perfect way to present each installment visually.

Each day when I see his illustrations, I am filled with gratitude and offer a prayer for the health and prosperity of Mr. Uchida and his family.



Everyone who has gathered in the garden of the Soka Gakkai, cherishing the dream of realizing kosen-rufu, has a noble mission. But without diligent effort, that mission cannot be achieved.

The great Japanese artist Hokusai Katsushika remained active and passionate about his work into his old age. Describing his goal to keep improving himself, he said, "By the time I'm 110, I hope to be able to draw a picture that seems truly, fully alive in every respect."

Fulfilling our mission hinges on having an ever-fresh spirit of challenge. We are all artists — artists painting a masterpiece of human revolution, a vast canvas of happiness and peace for all.

My dearest wish is that every single one of you, as great artists of kosen-rufu, will continue painting an immortal masterwork of life. Today, tomorrow and forever after.

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