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Shin'ichi Yamamoto tells the student division members: 'Unless you strive in all sincerity to deepen your faith, you will succumb to your inner weakness. But even if there is only one of you left, I will continue to encourage that one person and to work with that person to realize our goal.'

At his Kyoto University lecture, Shin'ichi Yamamoto addressed the male student who was thin and pale: "You don't have enough money to eat? That must be very tough. Let me help you out a little."

Embarrassed, the student replied, "No, please, that's all right. I can't accept that kind of help from you."

Shin'ichi smiled and said: "Don't be silly. I hope you will all think of me as an older brother. In that spirit, I intend to nurture each of you to become a person of great ability dedicated to the realization of peace and human happiness based on Buddhist ideals." This was Shin'ichi's firm conviction and desire.

Tomomasa Yamawaki, a graduate of Kyoto University who was now a judicial apprentice, also attended this first session of the lecture series on "One Hundred and Six Comparisons." He had joined the Soka Gakkai four years earlier. At that time, he was taking a long leave from school to tend to his nephritis, and was introduced to Nichiren Daishonin's teachings while he was recuperating. As he practiced his new faith, he gradually regained his health and eventually returned to university. He studied for the bar exam and passed in the fall of 1961.

As he introduced himself, Yamawaki proudly announced his current status as a judicial apprentice. In that pride, however, one could sense a kind of arrogance that was covering for a lack of self-confidence. Nevertheless, Shin'ichi was glad that a member of the student division had managed to pass the difficult bar examination. He recalled how, when he had been arrested on trumped-up charges during the Osaka Incident, there was not a single attorney he could count on. None had the backbone to take a stand for justice. Even though they knew perfectly well that Shin'ichi was innocent, they all advised him to prepare for a guilty verdict. [In the Osaka Incident, President Ikeda, then Soka Gakkai youth division chief of staff, was arrested and wrongfully charged with election law violations in an Upper House by-election in Osaka in 1957. At the end of the court case that dragged on for almost five years, he was fully exonerated of all charges in January 1962.]

Shin'ichi had to fight alone to clear his name. Because of that experience, he had long awaited the emergence of attorneys who would uphold the Buddhist principle of respect for the dignity of life and fight for justice and humanism. Now here was Tomomasa Yamawaki, who had passed the bar examination and was about to participate in the lectures on "One Hundred and Six Comparisons."

Shin'ichi said to Yamawaki: "So you've become a judicial apprentice. That's quite an achievement. Please do your best as a pioneer!" To all of the members, he then remarked, "I will protect each of you as long as I live." In fact, he continued for years to guide and encourage the students. He gave them unwavering support in many different ways. When, for example, Yamawaki became a full-fledged attorney, he was looked to from the start as a legal advisor to the Soka Gakkai.

Yamawaki, however, came to regard the Soka Gakkai, a realm formed from bonds of trust, as an ideal place to realize his personal ambitions. Faith is a struggle between the potential for Buddhahood and the potential for devilish or destructive tendencies—between the good and the evil—that exist within our own lives. Our Buddhist practice, which enables us to polish and develop ourselves, is essential to defeating this inner destructive nature. But Yamawaki, who neglected to make earnest, genuine efforts to strengthen his faith, was an easy target for the devil king of the sixth heaven.

Later, when he officially became legal advisor to the Soka Gakkai, he curried favor with the high priest of Nichiren Shoshu in a plot to bring the organization under the priesthood's thumb and gain control of the Soka Gakkai himself. When his ambitions were frustrated, he exploited his position as legal advisor to commit the preposterous crime of extortion against the Soka Gakkai, thereby revealing his true colors as a person of exceedingly malign nature.

Bent on destroying the Soka Gakkai even after serving time in prison for his crime, he would continue to conspire with the priesthood, shrewdly involving certain political forces and segments of the media.

Shin'ichi could see in Yamawaki's demeanor a considerable degree of dishonesty, arrogance and duplicity, and at times would strictly advise him about these shortcomings. But mostly he would warmly encourage and try to guide Yamawaki. Everyone has weaknesses. It is easy to break ties with people, but if we were to turn our backs on every person we deemed to have faults, we would be unable to help anyone grow or develop. Believing in the inherent goodness of human beings is the secret to fostering people; it is also the spirit of a Buddhist.

The more weaknesses or negative tendencies someone had, the more energy Shin'ichi put into encouraging that person. He tried to think of ways to help the person realize his or her full potential, and gave the person opportunities to take responsibility within the organization.

Shin'ichi was willing to forgive and embrace not only Yamawaki, but anyone who, despite having been deceitful in the past, awakened to the importance of living with integrity and began working wholeheartedly to contribute to kosen-rufu. But this good faith was often taken advantage of. Shin'ichi, however, wasn't afraid of being hurt, and because he continued to put great effort into fostering people, he was able to raise capable individuals who came to be active in the various areas of endeavor necessary for the realization of peace based on Buddhist ideals.

After the participants had finished introducing themselves, Shin'ichi told them: "There will be many temptations along the way to achieving kosen-rufu. There will be obstacles. Unless you strive in all sincerity to deepen your faith, you will succumb to your inner weakness. Some among you here today may abandon your faith or betray the Soka Gakkai in the future. But even if there is only one of you left, I will continue to encourage that one person and to work with that person to realize our goal.

"That said, however, I hope all of you remain to the very end. And I hope that you will continue striving together with me to spread the Daishonin's teachings around the world as long as you live."

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the
novel as Shin'ichi Yamamoto.
The events take place in 1963.