Courage Group
—Manual—
“The Wheel” by Pierre Le Faguays
Presented to Daisaku Ikeda - April 17, 2014

From the SGI-USA Men’s Division in appreciation for receiving the name, “Courage Group.” We determine to live out our vow courageously, always together with our mentor.
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CALENDAR YEAR

January: Region meeting. Introduction and study for March presentation.

February: Region meeting. Review materials on “Community” and prepare for March presentation.

March: Zone meeting: “Propagation.”

April: Region meeting. Study for June presentation.

May: Region meeting. Review materials on “Work” and prepare for June presentation.

June: Zone meeting: “Leadership.”

July: Region meeting. Study for September presentation.

August: Region meeting. Review materials on “Family” and prepare for September presentation.

September: Zone meeting: “Soka Spirit.”

October: Region meeting. Review materials on “Health” and prepare for November presentation.

November: Zone meeting: “Oneness of Mentor and Disciple.”

December: Graduation
Background

On March 13, 2014, we received the joyful news that SGI President Ikeda had given the name “Courage Group” to a selected gathering of men of SGI-USA, aged 35 to 45, who will study and train as leaders for the future of kosen-rufu.

Fundamental Spirit

The Courage Group is by no means a gathering of “elite” or special members. Its core spirit is expressed in this guidance from President Ikeda:

“To discard the shallow and seek the profound is the way of a person of courage’ (WND-1, 402). If you were going to spend your time here on earth seeking only your own pleasure and an easy life, there would be no reason to engrave these words in your heart.

“But if you have dedicated your lives to the noble purpose of kosen-rufu, I hope that you will continue to walk the great path of your successive missions to the end of your days, with the firm resolve to follow your chosen paths, whatever may happen, seeking the profound, in this valiant spirit” (NHR-23, pp. 279–280).

Goals of the Courage Group

Raise men who will shoulder responsibility for kosen-rufu well into the future;

Engage in study and dialogue to convey the spirit of mentor and disciple as related to the presidents of the Soka Gakkai, especially President Ikeda; and

Create bonds of friendship and the spirit of “many in body, one in mind” among the men of that generation.
Additionally, Courage Group members will:

Hear each others’ encouraging experiences in faith.
Ensure that graduating young men are warmly welcomed and at the same time given an opportunity to take on leadership in the men’s division.
Be a source of fresh ideas for men’s activities, invigorating and inspiring men of all ages.

The Spirit of Courage

As direct disciples of President Ikeda, Courage Group members will train themselves to:

*Cultivate the shakubuku spirit of substituting courage for compassion.*

“To be ready to face great obstacles and hardships [in the cause of compassionate shakubuku], and not fear or shun them—that is the heart of the great compassionate struggle of Nichiren Buddhism ... my mentor, Josei Toda, once said: ‘Our efforts to introduce others to Nichiren Buddhism, too, must brim with conviction and courage, as a manifestation of our great compassion’ (Daisaku Ikeda, July 2013 *Living Buddhism*, p. 26).

*Manifest the courage of the Wheel-turning King, who defeats all evil influences using the weapons of faith, discussion and dialogue.*

“‘The Wheel-turning King can travel throughout the entirety of the four continents in an instant’ (WND-1, 507). Time and again the Buddha turns the wheel of the Law from one friend to another, from here to there, from one country to the next. At the same time he bravely fights to refute evil. This is the Buddha’s struggle” (WLS-3, 186–87).
Become men who have courage based on faith to never avoid problems—winning with their families, in the workplace and in their communities.

Term/Membership/Planning and Support

The term of membership in the Courage Group is one year.

Beyond the basic age qualification, membership will be decided based on an interview process.

The Courage Group will gather each month. The curriculum divides the year into 4 quarters, ending with a graduation in December. Each quarter will be made up of two Region-level meetings and close with a Zone-level meeting. The last quarter will consist of a Region-level meeting, a Zone meeting and end with the graduation.

Men’s Division Region-up leaders will act as advisors and support staff, lead/attend Courage Group meetings and take faith responsibility for their success.

Courage Group members should have concrete assignments to prepare for each meeting.
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Editor’s Note

The citations most commonly used in this book have been abbreviated as follows:

- **GZ**, page number(s) refers to the *Gosho zenshu*, the Japanese-language compilation of letters, treatises, essays and oral teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.
- **LSOC**, page number(s) refers to *The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, translated by Burton Watson (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2009).
- **OTT**, page number(s) refers to *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, translated by Burton Watson (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2004).
- **WND**, page number(s) refers to *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1 (WND-1) (Tokyo, Soka Gakkai, 1999) and vol. 2 (WND-2) (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2006).
- **HR**, page number(s) refers to *The Human Revolution* (Santa Monica, World Tribune Press, 2004).
KAMATA CAMPAIGN: The February Campaign of the New Age

Young practitioners of the Mystic Law, buffeted by storms and blizzards, may you grow as strong as mighty trees undefeated by the bitter cold.

“The Teacher of the Law” (10th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra clearly states: “If one of these good men or good women in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even one phrase of it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. He has been dispatched by the Thus Come One and carries out the Thus Come One’s work” (The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras, p. 200). When we reach out to talk to others about Nichiren Buddhism—whether or not our efforts lead to the other
person taking faith—we are carrying out “the Thus Come One’s work,” namely, the work of the Buddha, and accumulating vast and immeasurable benefit.

My mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, put it very simply: “No one in the suffering-filled saha world is free of problems or worries. That is why the Buddha is compelled to encourage others and lead them to enlightenment. This is the spirit of propagation of the Lotus Sutra.” Buddhahood pulses spontaneously in our care and concern for others, and in our efforts to speak to them about Buddhism out of a sincere wish for their happiness.

Mr. Toda also said: “Through the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, you can fully and completely show others the way to overcome their problems at the very core and find what they are seeking. You need to have courage and sincerity. Your sincerity is certain to be communicated to the other person without fail.”

This year again, a series of lively Youth Division Introductory Seminars has been launched in Mr. Toda’s home region of Hokkaido, Japan, to commemorate the anniversary of the February Campaign. [In February 1952, the 24-year-old Daisaku Ikeda initiated a historic propagation campaign as chapter advisor of Kamata Chapter in Tokyo. As a single chapter, Kamata introduced 201 households to Nichiren Buddhism in a single month—a crucial breakthrough in achieving President Toda’s cherished lifetime goal of introducing 750,000 families to Buddhism.]

These gatherings will bring together youth, member and non-member alike, at more than 200 venues throughout Hokkaido. Many people in all areas of society have great hopes for the youthful networks we are creating, viewing them as a positive force for revitalizing local communities.

In Tohoku’s Miyagi Prefecture, where valiant reconstruction efforts are under way following last year’s March 11 earthquake and tsunami, youth division members are now busily working together in preparation for their planned Soka Youth Festivals.

I am sure that Mr. Toda would be delighted to see the spirit-ed endeavors of our youthful successors this February, which also marks the 112th anniversary of his birth (on Feb. 11).
How was I able to lead the members to victory in the February Campaign 60 years ago? It was ultimately because I did my utmost to wholeheartedly encourage the person right in front of me.

Kosen-rufu begins with the human revolution of a single individual. One individual who has resolved to take action inspires another to do the same. That second individual then inspires another. Courage calls forth courage. This infinite chain of fresh resolve spreading from one person to another is the unchanging formula for developing our movement. That is why fostering as many committed individuals as possible is an indispensable requirement for achieving explosive growth in the development of kosen-rufu.

The famous American inventor Thomas Edison (1847–1931), who was born on the same day as Mr. Toda, said: “A shining diamond lies hidden within everything. If you polish it, it will sparkle.” All our members are noble, capable individuals who shine like sparkling diamonds. Every one of them has a mission to demonstrate the greatness of Nichiren Buddhism. They are precious and valuable without compare.

For that reason, I was eager to encourage all those who were exerting themselves tirelessly on the front lines of our movement during the February Campaign in 1952. I earnestly chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for everyone to joyfully engage in the campaign, and tried to come up with all kinds of ways to inspire them so that they could freely display their full potential.

I was the youngest among the Kamata Chapter leaders at the time. If I had called meetings and acted self-importantly, who would have listened to me? My only option was to do the actual work myself; going out and personally meeting with people, and walking alongside the members in the cold winter wind.

I threw myself wholeheartedly into every discussion meeting I attended, every home visit I made, every letter of encouragement I wrote. I regarded each activity as if it were a decisive battleground.

When a member was having trouble sharing Buddhism with others, I took them with me when I spoke to others about our Buddhist practice, hoping they would learn from my example.
And instead of doing all the talking myself, I’d ask other members present to relate their personal experiences in faith or explain the basics of Buddhism to the person we were talking to. This enabled everyone to develop confidence and deepen their conviction.

Members who were older than me also stood up to take action alongside me. As a young man, I was especially heartened and gratified when men in their 40s enthusiastically joined me in moving our campaign forward.

All the Kamata members actively exerted themselves to share Nichiren Buddhism with others, even though they each had personal problems of their own. It is such courage that inspires others to summon forth the strength and vitality to also stand up, and bravely overcome their problems.

No one could sit still; everyone was spurred to take action. Even members who had never before spoken about their Buddhist practice to those around them, and newer members who hadn’t felt confident enough to talk to others, took a courageous step forward.

The unity born from valuing each individual could rightly be called the driving force for victory in the February Campaign. As the Daishonin writes, “Although Nichiren and his followers are few, because they are different in body, but united in mind [i.e., many in body, one in mind], they will definitely accomplish their great mission of widely propagating the Lotus Sutra [Nam-myoho-renge-kyo]” (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 618).

To lead the way forward, I took untold pains so that everyone could demonstrate their unique abilities and work together in unity and mutual respect. In particular, I encouraged the youth to have older members with solid, real-life experiences of the power of faith in the Mystic Law to assist them in their efforts to share Buddhism with others. The Kamata members all worked together as a team. When they heard of someone who was struggling, they went to talk to them about Buddhism. Discussion meetings were also held on an almost daily basis, seeking to relieve people of suffering and impart joy.
On one occasion, a women’s division member who had just started practicing summoned up her courage to visit a friend to tell her about Nichiren Buddhism, and I accompanied her. She was so nervous and anxious on the way there that her knees were shaking. I said, “Let’s sing a Soka Gakkai song and enjoy ourselves!” At first, she sang in a small, tremulous voice, but as we sang “Song of Comrades” together several times, she visibly brightened and became more positive. Although she was unable to persuade her friend to join the Soka Gakkai that day, encouraged by that experience, that same member later went on to successfully introduce many people to the practice of Nichiren Buddhism.

A whirlwind of joy swept through Kamata Chapter, as everyone continued to reach out in dialogue to one friend after another, sowing the seeds of Buddhahood by “letting people hear the teaching.” We lost all track of numbers, but we must have spoken to several hundreds.

By the end of February, having fought our hardest, we achieved the unprecedented monthly propagation result of 201 new member households. Everyone had achieved a personal breakthrough. It was a case of new members bringing forth fresh energy, and their fresh unity powering a new wave of development.

The February Campaign of Kamata Chapter ignited the momentum of kosen-rufu not only throughout Tokyo but also in neighboring Kanagawa Prefecture, across the Tama River. It also spread to the Chubu region (Aichi, Mie and Gifu prefectures), Yamanashi Prefecture and Chiba Prefecture, then to snowy Akita Prefecture in the Tohoku region. A hope-filled spring was approaching as the groundswell of propagation spread throughout the country, including the islands of Shikoku and Kyushu in the south and extending to even Kushiro on the island of Hokkaido in the north.

There was one women’s division member who worked very hard to share Buddhism with others, despite difficult personal circumstances. Even though her husband opposed her practice and she had to work on piecework at home in the evenings to augment
her family’s income, each morning she would set out with a couple of rice balls for her lunch and dinner and talk to others about Buddhism. Even when her efforts did not produce the results she’d hoped, she continued to forge ahead unperturbed. She and her fellow members cheered one another on, engraving in their hearts the Daishonin’s words, “Still I am not discouraged” (WND-1, 748).

With the spirit she learned during the February Campaign—chanting and fighting with the determination to succeed without fail rather than giving up before even starting—this women’s division member eventually went on to introduce more than 300 households to the practice of Nichiren Buddhism. I am happy to say that she remains vibrantly active today, at age 92. As a member of the Many Treasures Group, she also takes great pride in having been a student in the correspondence program of Soka University.

Every single member who has striven for kosen-rufu alongside me shines brightly in my memory. Some of them have passed away, but we remain connected by Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, transcending life and death, and I also maintain ties with many of their children and grandchildren.

The mother of SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima was also a dedicated pioneering member. She decided to join the Soka Gakkai when she visited the Shiraki residence, my wife’s family home, which was the main activity base of Kamata Chapter during the February Campaign.

I recently received a report from Mr. Nagashima, incidentally, sharing that the members in Alaska, a place that brings back many fond memories for me, are striving together in harmony and high spirits, undeterred by a freezing temperature of 9 degrees Fahrenheit.

The emergence of a fresh dynamic force, the power of the people, opens a new age.

In February 1986, the People Power Revolution—also known as the February Revolution—took place in the Philippines, bringing to an end 21 years of dictatorship. Former Philippine president Fidel Ramos played a critical role in this dramatic, bloodless revo-
lution that ushered in a new age of democracy for the Philippines. President Ramos sent me New Year’s greetings again this year.

At our fourth meeting (on Oct. 29, 1998), I asked President Ramos what had been the key to the success of the People Power Revolution. With a serious expression, he replied that it was due to the strength of the Philippine people’s conviction, their belief in themselves and their strong religious faith. “To win their freedom,” he continued, “the Philippine people were willing to lay down their very lives. The revolution succeeded because the people were fully prepared to go ahead whatever the cost.”

In fact, women played an important role in the revolution’s success. The immediate trigger for the fall of the dictatorship was tens and hundreds of thousands of citizens pouring into the streets and forming a human barricade on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue in Manila. Resisting the government could have resulted in being killed. Yet in spite of that threat, it was the women of Manila, young and old, who persuaded their hesitant husbands, fathers, brothers and sons to take part in the demonstration. It was the victory of women with strong conviction and a desire for peace.

In the Soka Gakkai, too, the women’s division members’ words of conviction, their warm words of encouragement that are like a spring breeze, resonate deeply in people’s hearts. Similarly, the bright smiles of young women’s division members impart immense hope to their fellow members.

Today, in the Philippines and around the world, the women of the SGI are engaging in lively dialogues for the happiness and victory of all, and expanding peace. My wife and I pray every day that they will strive together in good health and high spirits, even more harmoniously united, and realize wonderful, victorious lives.

“Anyone who hopes to spread the Buddhist teachings must make certain to understand the time” (WND-1, 49), writes Nichiren Daishonin in “The Teaching, Capacity, Time, and Country,” which he composed in February 1262, 750 years ago.

Today, a general sense of anxiety for the future prevails as the world faces many difficult problems and challenges. But, as I men-
tioned in my most recent peace proposal, that makes it all the more imperative for us to engage in dialogue for the sake of lasting peace, trusting in the limitless potential of all human beings, in the spirit of the Daishonin’s treatise, “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.” We need to unite in that cause in order to dispel the sense of stagnation that pervades society, believing in one another’s possibilities and working together to bring forth those capabilities.

The Daishonin gave a lecture on his treatise, “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” at the Ikegami residence in Ota Ward shortly before his death. Mr. Toda was lecturing on this same writing when I first met him at a discussion meeting in Kamata, Ota Ward. Similarly, it was from Ota, a place of such profound and wondrous connections, that, 60 years ago, the February Campaign, through the power of ordinary people, created a movement of dialogue and solidarity for peace and happiness based on the ideals and principles of Nichiren Buddhism. And now once again, my beloved fellow members everywhere are engaged in a new February Campaign, striving earnestly to share the Daishonin’s teachings with others, day after day.

At this most meaningful time, let’s all strive energetically with youthful hearts, together with the youth! Let’s joyously and victoriously usher in a new age of a youthful SGI, holding high the banner of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.”

*The destined time
has come at last.
May the sun always shine on
the heroic Bodhisattvas
of the Earth
in their endeavors.*
In his efforts to strengthen the Soka Gakkai, Shin’ichi focused on the front lines of the organization. This is the main arena of the Soka Gakkai’s efforts, the place where victory in the movement for kosen-rufu is decided. The mission of leaders is to heartily encourage the members at the forefront of the organization, inspiring as many as possible to stand up and take action.

In 1952, when Shin’ichi was taking the lead in the February Campaign as the adviser of Tokyo’s Kamata Chapter, he focused entirely on the unit level, the front line of the organization. Propagation goals were set and discussion meetings held by unit. The campaign proceeded by clarifying the daily activities of each member in the unit and mutually reconfirming their determination.

Shin’ichi visited the units and encouraged the members. He spoke one-to-one, in small groups. He also made a wholehearted effort to talk with members who didn’t have a firm self-awareness of belonging to the Soka Gakkai yet. It was hard, grassroots-orient-
ed work that went largely unseen. None of it was attention-grabbing or in the spotlight. However, it was through those efforts that members awakened to their mission and stood up to trigger a new wave of expansion, resulting in the unprecedented achievement of introducing more than two hundred new households in a single chapter in one month. This opened the way for the accomplishment of the goal of 750,000 households set forth by Shin’ichi’s mentor, President Toda.

Kosen-rufu and Buddhist practice take place on the front lines of the organization.

The Soka Gakkai is a place for humanistic education, teaching people how to polish and elevate themselves, live in a genuinely humane way and work for the good of society.

President Toda thought of the Soka Gakkai as a university without a campus, and, as such, the front lines of our organization as the classrooms and study halls of that university.

At the beginning of February, Shin’ichi spoke with the Soka Gakkai general director and vice presidents who were taking charge of the greater block leaders meetings on his behalf. During their discussion, the subject of how to strengthen the greater blocks arose. As if he’d been waiting for this moment, Shin’ichi started to speak: “In each greater block, we have general block leaders and other leaders who have been assigned as well as the divisional greater block leaders. The most important thing is unity among those leaders. Such unity begins from our personal determination to take full responsibility for each greater block, instead of leaving it up to others.

“Each leader needs to be powerfully determined to create an organization that they can be proud of, representing the ideal Soka Gakkai.

“In addition, leaders should work together with the members and encourage each one of them, making our local organizations into places in which all members feel, from the bottom of their hearts, that you really care about them and are thinking about their problems and their welfare, and that their local organization is the
most beautiful and warm group of members in the world, where they’ve learned the true meaning of Buddhist faith.

“In particular, it is important that the men’s and women’s division greater block leaders, the guardians of our greater blocks, the indomitable citadels of Soka, have the awareness that they, too, are the presidents of the Soka Gakkai.

“I rarely have the opportunity to meet with the members of the greater blocks on an individual basis, so I want you to be my representatives and speak to them, listen to their problems, rally them, inspire them and warmly encourage them.

“Please think about what I would do as president of the Soka Gakkai, how I would encourage them and then strive to surpass me in that spirit.”

The top leaders listened to Shin’ichi’s impassioned words, watching him intently.

“Next, it’s vital that all the members experience benefit. To ensure this, you should talk to each of them at length and demonstrate for them the practice of chanting and propagating Nichiren Buddhism—of dedicating one’s life to the mission of kosen-rufu. This is a crucial way to creating benefit and becoming genuinely happy.”

“What is the purpose of the Soka Gakkai organization? It is for kosen-rufu, and for all its members to receive benefit and become truly happy. That’s the aim of our Soka Gakkai activities. We must never forget this most basic point.

“When we receive benefit, we gain heartfelt conviction in the greatness of the Gohonzon and the power of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. We’re filled with joy and our confidence in faith deepens.

“It is also important that we tell others about our experiences of receiving benefit and share one another’s joy and conviction. As we accumulate various experiences of receiving benefits, our conviction deepens, and when we know the joys of this Buddhist faith and practice, we naturally want to talk about it with others. Through that practice, our joy is further increased.
“Strengthening the greater block depends, then, on how much benefit its members can experience, how much human revolution they can achieve and how joyful they are.

Concretely speaking, an ideal example of a really strong greater block is one in which, when you ask its members in a discussion meeting, ‘Can someone share an experience of receiving benefits?’ everyone eagerly raises their hand, excited to tell others. This is not something that can be measured by statistics.”

The top leaders were surprised at what Shin’ichi was saying. When Shin’ichi had started talking about strengthening the greater blocks, they expected him to talk about assigning multiple levels of leaders and holding regular training sessions for greater block and block leaders. Of course, such strategic measures are also important. But before looking at such structural issues, Shin’ichi wanted to return to the starting point of being human and clarify the source of vitality in the organization’s activities.

The human heart is what drives everything. That’s why a humanistic leader concentrates on inspiring people first and foremost.

“Happiness is the aim of human life, and, as such, must also be the aim of education.” This was the belief of Soka education founder Tsunesaburo Makiguchi.

The fundamental purpose of education is to enable children to live happy lives.

On the evening of February 6, 1977, at a restaurant in Shinanomachi, Tokyo, Shin’ichi was dining and talking with a group of dormitory student representatives from the Soka schools.

Shin’ichi wore a happy expression as he listened intently to these young phoenixes who were developing both mentally and physically through their experience of studying at the Soka schools in Musashino, Tokyo.

Their faces were shining with hope as they spoke excitedly about life in the dormitories and other school-related topics. The humanistic education taking place at the schools, a united effort of students and teachers, training and polishing one another’s lives, with an awareness of their future mission after graduation, was clearly
apparent.

From the early 1970s throughout Japan, numerous student-related issues had come to the fore, such as increasing numbers of students who couldn’t keep up with their schoolwork, a lack of recreational facilities, and growing cases of broken bones and stress-related gastric ulcers in children.

In December 1976, the Curriculum Council of the Ministry of Education announced the concluding results of a three-year study. It emphasized the need to create a less high-pressure and more fulfilling educational environment, and set forth a policy for reducing textbooks and classroom hours. Based on the report, the Ministry of Education started to revise its curriculum guidelines.

Observing these changes in the educational realm, Shin’ichi thought about the future.

Naturally it’s vital to get a clear grasp of the present reality and reform our policies, he thought. But prior to that, I believe it’s even more essential to establish an educational system that motivates each child and fosters his or her awareness of the greater purpose of school and studying.

If we don’t cultivate students’ sense of personal initiative and spirit to challenge, this idea of a less stressful educational environment will result in a serious drop in academic achievement. In order to bring out this spirit to challenge, the attitude of teachers is vital.

After his meal that day with the Soka schools students, Shin’ichi planned to attend the 1st Tokyo Education Department Meeting, believing that the mission of the education department is extremely crucial in light of the issues confronting contemporary education.

The education department was established at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters General Meeting held on May 3, 1961, a year after Shin’ichi had been inaugurated as the organization’s third president.

The education department inherited the source of the Soka Gakkai’s founding spirit. The Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value-Creating
Education Society; forerunner of the Soka Gakkai) was established when founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi stood up to reform Japanese education and published his book Soka kyoikugakutaikei (The System of Value-Creating Education), based on his commitment to improve conditions for students, the treasures of the future. At that early stage, most of the members of the groups were educators.

The education department carried on Mr. Makiguchi’s educational philosophy that striving to realize the full potential of children in the classroom is the key to a prosperous society.

This is why Shin’ichi wholeheartedly devoted himself to fostering the members of the education department.

When he learned that the education department was holding a general meeting, he overcame all sorts of difficulties to attend. On occasions when he simply couldn’t attend, he composed a message to the educators filled with his fervent prayers for them.

And in 1964, he conducted a special lecture series for representative members, based on one of Nichiren's writings “Choosing the Heart of the Lotus Sutra” (WND-2, 481–91).

Shin’ichi regarded the education department members as unparalleled champions who have a grand mission to transform society. This was his conviction and belief.

Society is an organic body created by human beings. As such, the future of society and the world rests on how its young people are fostered and raised, making education the most important of all human enterprises, demanding our utmost efforts.

Teachers are the most important element of the educational environment, exerting the strongest influence on children. President Makiguchi stated that teachers are essential to educational reform. Their ability to continue to polish and improve themselves is, from a broader perspective, the key to the further development of society.

Education must be grounded in a philosophy. It is vital that new morals and educational principles are established for the twenty-first century—principles for global citizenship that have a universal application, transcending national and ethnic boundar-
ies—firmly rooted in the philosophy of respect for life. That’s the only way to open the great way forward for education.

In a passage in the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha declares his intent to enable all beings to become “equal to me, without any distinction between us” (LSOC, 70). The Buddha opens the state of infinite possibility, Buddhahood, that resides within all living beings, and helps them all, equally, reach the same state of being, the same life condition as the Buddha. This, the Lotus Sutra says, is the Buddha’s mission.

Shin’ichi regarded this as the fundamental principle of humanistic education.

The purpose of education is to build character, to create human beings, not machines.

What a noble existence it is to be human! Human beings possess unlimited potential in the inner depths of their lives that is the source from which all culture is created. Humanistic education draws out that infinite potential, polishes it and brings it toward perfection, enabling children to lead happy lives and society to prosper.

From the time of the student protests of the 1960s, when the deteriorated state of Japanese education was revealed, Shin’ichi had continuously stressed the urgent need to implement such a humanistic education.

At the beginning of 1971, in a lengthy message he sent to an education department gathering, Shin’ichi strongly emphasized the importance of humanistic education. It was the one hundredth-anniversary of the birth of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the year of the opening of Soka University and the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the education department. The embers of the student protest movement were still smoldering.

“There is no nobler mission than fostering character. Education is the lifeblood of the new century. The importance of education has never been more critical than it is today.

“In the past, nationalistic education predominated, but it has proven to be completely bankrupt, and now the direction has shifted to a humanistic education. Today, we must focus on how we
should live as human beings.”

In his message, Shin’ichi Yamamoto insightfully noted the current issues with education.

“The breakdown of the educational system reflects the decline of civilization as a whole and could ultimately lead to the deterioration of the human race itself. Many leaders today are only focused on short-term gains and immediate concerns. They lack a broader perspective of what is needed to build a better future. They have closed their eyes to the living relationship between humanity and its environment; closed their ears to the melodic rhythm of diversity and have made no effort to listen to the real heartbeat of life. Like the nationalistic education of the prewar era, the education offered today is empty, regarding people as little more than cogs in a machine. It’s only to be expected that the hearts of young people, which are so sensitive and pure, will find no place in this kind of education. This is the fallacy of our present age of alienation.”

Shin’ichi went on to discuss how as educators they should advance humanistic education.

“Educators striving to perfect their characters and grow as human beings are the core of humanistic education. The quality of education will only improve when educators move beyond the traditional teacher-student relationship to one that enables the mutual growth of both teachers and students through focusing on creating a better future.”

“You are the standard bearers of this humanistic education. That means that you are also the standard bearers of a humanistic culture. A great new philosophy of humanity will surely be the source of a new education and culture.”

When he had finished writing this message, Shin’ichi contemplated a time a decade into the future.

“If educators burning with a commitment to the mission of humanistic education strive assiduously and tirelessly to study and improve themselves, they’ll be able to make a breakthrough in an educational revolution that will illuminate Japan’s future with a great light of hope. It’s no exaggeration to say that the actions of
the education department in the coming decade can salvage Japan.”

Shin’ichi then thought about twenty, thirty and forty years into the future.

Eventually, a steady stream of Soka University graduates will enter the education profession, and the education department will become even stronger. At that time Soka education, a humanistic education based on the philosophy of the dignity of life, will become a main current of education around the world.

The education department members were deeply stirred by Shin’ichi’s message, and they courageously took action.

On August 2, the education department held its 7th General Meeting to commemorate the centennial of the birth of Mr. Maki-guchi and the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the department, marking a new start in its practice of humanistic education.

Shin’ichi also sent a message to the meeting, sounding a warning about the present state of education: “It is often noted that in the name of modernization, our educational system places too much emphasis on acquiring information, and the crucial development of human potential is directed toward the struggle to survive. But behind that, we can see a prevailing pattern of negligence that can only be described as a failure to take responsibility for education.

“Will we continue in that direction, or strive to change it? This, I believe, is the central problem we face today.

“The establishment of humanistic education is a call for a restoration of the mission and rights of education in response to this abdication of responsibility. I have the highest hopes for your profound wisdom and undying passion, as well as your superbly coordinated practical efforts, based on your awareness of education for building human character enriched by compassion and dialogue.”

Ultimately, educational reform comes down to the way educators live. Educational revolution depends on human revolution.

In 1973, based on the mottos “The Education Department, Open to Society” and “From the Podium to the Community,” the education department attempted to contribute at the community level in various ways.
Shin’ichi had the highest hopes for the activities of education department members, and each time they held a major event, he sent them a long message offering eternal guidance. He also regularly conferred with department representatives. Each time they received guidance and encouragement from Shin’ichi, they strengthened their determination to be practitioners of humanistic education, and they continued to make wholehearted efforts, trying various methods and ideas, to become the best possible educators.

They also tried in a variety of ways to make contributions to the local community. By constantly thinking about what they could do for society and taking action, a fresh creative force was born.
How majestic our uncrowned heroes braving heavy snows [to deliver the Seikyo Shimbun each morning]!

I wish to sincerely commend all of our dedicated members who are striving for kosen-rufu in this cold winter season. I especially appreciate the daily efforts of our Seikyo Shimbun newspaper deliverers. When the weather is bad, please don’t take any unnecessary risks or rush on your rounds. Always carry out your great mission, giving utmost priority to your health and safety.

One evening recently (on Jan. 23), the Tokyo Metropolitan Area experienced its first substantial snowfall in some time. At 4:30 the next morning, when it was still dark and freezing, members of the Soka High School baseball team living at the Seikyu Dormitory
were out shoveling snow in the street in front of Higashiyamatoshi Station, a short distance from the schools’ baseball ground and adjacent dormitory.

No one told them to do so. Wishing to be of assistance to the local community that always showed warm support for their team, they decided on their own initiative to get up early and head out into a frozen white world. Under the supervision of the dormitory caretaker, they put the muscle they’d gained from their sports training into scraping away the hardened ice and snow. By 6 a.m., when commuters started to arrive at the station, they had cleared a path. And then, just as if they had finished an early-morning training session, the youth went off to school as usual.

When people in the community later learned about what the young men had done, they were impressed. The Soka students’ efforts were introduced on the Higashiyamato City website, along with similar volunteer snow shoveling by students from other schools.

I am reminded of the words of the late Nobel Peace laureate Wangari Maathai (1940–2011): “It is very, very important for us to take action at the local level, because sometimes when we think of global problems, we get disempowered, but when we take action at the local level, we are empowered.”

The day after the snowfall, Tokyo had sunny skies.

My wife mentioned that she often recalls what her friend from the snowy Hokuriku region once said to her: “One of the nice things about Tokyo is that the day after it snows, the sun usually shines.”

Thinking of the hardships of our members in snowy areas of Japan and other parts of the world, my wife and I have been praying daily for their safety and well-being.

Nichiren Daishonin’s exile on Sado Island was also a bitter struggle with wind and snow. He writes, “There, true to the nature of that northern land, I found the wind particularly strong in winter, the snows deep” (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1, p. 519). And Mount Minobu, where he resided in his final years, was often subject to heavy snowfalls. The winter of 1278
was particularly harsh. In one of his letters, he writes of that time: “When we ask the longtime older residents, the ones who are eighty, ninety, and a hundred all say there has never been a winter as cold as this . . . About one cho [approximately 110 yards] away from here, the snow is piled up to a height of ten feet, twenty feet, or five feet even in shallow places” (WND-2, 806). The snow was so deep and the temperatures so cold that even the island’s oldest residents were surprised. While weathering such harsh winters year after year, the Daishonin carried on his determined struggle for the eternal transmission of the Law. His words “Winter always turns to spring” (WND-1, 536) resonate with his infinitely profound and invincible spirit.

Our members in snowy regions— warmly encouraging one another and working together in solid unity for kosen-rufu, undaunted by heavy snowfalls—have inherited the Daishonin’s very same spirit. I am absolutely certain that they are accumulating immeasurable good fortune and benefit as a result.

I once sent the following poem to members of Shin’etsu — one such snowy region of Japan:

Enjoy and speak of the benefits of faith you are accumulating in your life, deeper than the snow, proud of your mission in this world.

On May 3, 1951, having overcome a winter of adversity, my mentor Josei Toda was inaugurated as the second president of the Soka Gakkai. On that landmark day, he announced his lifetime aspiration of achieving a membership of 750,000 households who embraced faith in the Gohonzon. Propagating the Mystic Law, however, is the most difficult of all undertakings, and the reality of those early days was that our efforts to introduce Nichiren Buddhism to others weren’t producing the kind of results we’d hoped for. The leaders were at a loss and frankly wondered how they could get propagation to take off.

In response, President Toda said: “Worrying about the ways and means of running the organization or getting the organization moving should be the last of your concerns . . . The force that drives this organization is absolute conviction and passion for faith. We have to bring such conviction and passion for faith to well forth as
energy throughout our membership.” In other words, he was clearly saying to us: Don’t focus on ways and means; instead, return to the starting point of faith. Take action with conviction and passion, and open the way for the development of our movement by employing the strategy of the Lotus Sutra—namely, faith in the Mystic Law.

The mentor sets forth the principle. It is up to the disciples to take action to put it into practice.

As a representative of the young men’s division, I once made a presentation titled “The Conviction of Youth” at a Soka Gakkai headquarters general meeting (in November 1951). I was motivated by the wish, as Mr. Toda’s disciple, to take the initiative and make a breakthrough in our struggle: “Proving the truth and validity of the Daishonin’s teachings rests entirely on the efforts of the Soka Gakkai, on the efforts of the youth division . . . I state my conviction as a youth, firmly pledging to triumph over all onslaughts of the three powerful enemies, to win the attention of people throughout the world and to accomplish our glorious struggle [for kosen-rufu], thereby responding to President Toda’s expectations.”

I remember Mr. Toda looking on happily as I made this declaration on the stage.

Nichikan Shonin (1665–1726), a great restorer of Nichiren Buddhism, writes in his commentary on the treatise “On Repaying Debts of Gratitude”: “It is the wish of all teachers in fostering and training their disciples to widely proclaim the great Law.” In other words, the mentor’s sole aim is that the disciples can freely take action to advance kosen-rufu. Therefore, Nichikan Shonin goes on to state that the disciples “repay their debt of gratitude to their teacher by transmitting the Law and benefiting others.” As disciples, the ultimate way of repaying our gratitude to our mentor is to dedicate ourselves to propagating the Mystic Law and leading as many people as possible toward a life of genuine happiness.

Determined to achieve great strides in propagation that would truly make Mr. Toda proud, I threw myself into the February Campaign of the Kamata Chapter. That cold winter of 1952, I was 24 years old.

The spark that truly ignited the February Campaign was an
emergency meeting of the frontline unit leaders (the equivalent of today’s block or group leaders). I pledged together with the 130 members who braved the biting cold wind to attend that day: “February is the birth month of both Nichiren Daishonin and Mr. Toda. We have been able to encounter faith in the Mystic Law thanks to the Daishonin’s appearance in this world and the intrepid postwar struggle of Mr. Toda. Let’s achieve a resounding victory in our propagation efforts in this month of February as an expression of our appreciation!”

There is nothing as strong or as sublime as a person whose heart is always filled with gratitude. In the realm of Buddhism, gratitude is the foundation for everything.

The Daishonin writes, “Those who become Nichiren’s disciples and lay believers should realize the profound karmic relationship they share with him and spread the Lotus Sutra as he does” (WND-1, 994). With gratitude in our hearts, all of us in Kamata stood up with a powerful determination to share the Mystic Law with others, just as the Daishonin instructs in this passage. Though we were just ordinary people, our hearts were directly connected to the Daishonin, and the courage, wisdom and compassion of the Buddha began to flow vibrantly within us. We all brimmed with pride and confidence.

Back in those days, everyone just accepted as fact that 100 was the maximum number of new members a single chapter could possibly hope to introduce in a month.

During the Kamata campaign, however, rather than setting a chapter target, we concentrated our attention on each individual unit (today’s block or group) and set a goal of two households per unit. I also offered the following three concrete guidelines: (1) Let’s start with chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, (2) Let’s treasure our neighbors and (3) Let’s share our experiences in faith.

I had practiced all three of these guidelines myself. I helped overcome the crisis faced by Mr. Toda’s businesses by “praying as earnestly as though to produce fire from damp wood, or to obtain water from parched ground” (WND-1, 444). I had also always cheerfully greeted my fellow residents of the Aoba Apartments in
Omori, in Tokyo’s Ota Ward, and spoken to them about Buddhism whenever I had the chance. I even fondly remember doing gongyo with such neighborhood friends in my tiny apartment. In addition, I had spoken to many people about my personal experience of overcoming illness through my Buddhist practice.

The members responded to and came to share my passionate determination to achieve a result that Mr. Toda would applaud.

“It’s not up to others. It’s up to us. We have to act now, not sometime in the future. It’s not impossible! We can make it happen!” — gradually and very naturally, the hearts of the Kamata members became aligned with Mr. Toda’s great vow for kosen-rufu, and everyone began to take action as disciples who shared the same commitment as their mentor.

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth voluntarily appear in this world to carry out the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law together with their teacher. All Soka Gakkai members are just such great bodhisattvas. Once we awaken to our mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth, we cannot possibly fail to demonstrate our true potential as foremost champions of kosen-rufu. There is no obstacle or limitation that we cannot surmount. By engaging in our propagation effort with this spirit, we, the members of Kamata Chapter, not only easily broke through the upper monthly limit of 100 member households, but also broke through the 200 mark.

Six decades have passed since that original February Campaign of 1952, a shining achievement in the history of the Soka Gakkai.

On this significant anniversary, our youth division members in Japan, brimming with fresh energy and vigor, are now joining with men’s and women’s division members to conduct Soka Youth Seminars and other events to promote dialogue to deepen friendships and share our conviction in the greatness of Nichiren Buddhism.

Incidentally, next month, to celebrate March 16—Kosen-rufu Day—the young women’s division in Japan will welcome the fifth class of the Ikeda Kayo-kai.

I hope you will have the profound and lofty spirit to make this significant month of February one of growth and victory for both yourselves and others—to make it a lifelong cornerstone or starting
point. Nothing would please me more.

Sharing my spirit, the members of the men’s and women’s divisions are reaching out to foster and support the youth in their communities in order to build a youthful SGI. I am profoundly grateful for their dedicated efforts.

We are creating truly noble circles of friendship throughout the world.

Carrying on this glorious [February] tradition of the shared commitment of mentor and disciple, which shines brightly through our victory and burning resolve, is our honor and pride.

(April 6, 2012 World Tribune)
VALUING PEOPLE
FIRST AND FOREMOST

This essay was published in the “Thoughts on The New Human Revolution” series in the Oct. 4 Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “If the spirit of many in body but one in mind prevails among the people, they will achieve all their goals, whereas if one in body but different in mind, they can achieve nothing remarkable” (The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 618). This is a famous passage, radiant with an unchanging principle that holds true for all affairs, in all ages and lands.

The Soka Gakkai is a living, dynamic organization working to carry out kosen-rufu, to realize peace for all humanity and happiness for the entire world. There has never been, nor ever will be, an organization with a more sublime mission.

There are no days off in this noble struggle for the Law. The Soka Gakkai is a gathering of valiant champions of the Buddha, who are always forging ahead energetically and intrepidly over
mountain after mountain of arduous challenges.

In order to initiate another great advance, we need a revitalized leadership lineup brimming with fresh vigor and determination.

In Japan, the young men’s division, student division, and future division have all embarked on a fresh, lively start with an array of new leaders. And our women’s and young women’s divisions, too, spearheading our drive toward a Century of Women, have begun to move forward with their characteristic exuberance.

In addition, new appointments have been made to the recently created position of Soka Gakkai vice general director. Many new leadership appointments have also been made at the ward, prefecture, general prefecture and region levels around the country. Currently, efforts are under way to appoint new leaders to the frontline headquarters, chapter and district levels of the organization.

At this time of fresh departure, unity is crucial. The great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote, “Those who cannot work harmoniously with their fellow human beings lose their true ability.” We cannot succeed, as the poet says, without unity. Let us completely unite our hearts, our prayers and our efforts!

Given the diverse array of positions in our organization, different leaders will be called on to play different roles. Some may be in the spotlight, while others work behind the scenes.

However, we are all praiseworthy champions of Buddhism who have emerged from the earth to spread the Mystic Law. Whether president or group leader, we are all equal as fellow members of the Soka Gakkai, dedicated to the cause of kosen-rufu.

Leadership positions within the Soka Gakkai are positions of responsibility. They are the emblems of courageous individuals who have voluntarily taken on the mission of expanding kosen-rufu and who battle against powerful negative forces to resolutely protect their fellow members.

Therefore, our Soka Gakkai activities—giving us the opportunity to take on leadership and responsibility for our movement—represent a noble means of Buddhist practice by which we can carry out our human revolution.
One day, I was with my mentor, Josei Toda, in the “president’s office” at the old Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Nishi-Kanda, Tokyo. Though at the time the Headquarters did not have an officially designated president’s office, I referred to the spot from where Mr. Toda usually led activities for kosen-rufu by that name. [From 1946–53, the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, which was located on the second floor of the same Nishi-Kanda building that housed President Toda’s business offices, was comprised of just two small rooms.]

Anyway, on that particular occasion, President Toda asked me, “Daisaku, would you take on the position of Kamata Chapter advisor and get things seriously moving there?”

On observing the low monthly figures for new membership, he decided that the time had come to put me in the forefront of activities. He appointed me to a chapter leadership position in Kamata, in Tokyo’s Ota Ward.

This was in January 1952. Some nine months had passed since President Toda’s inauguration as second Soka Gakkai president and, contrary to his expectations, membership growth had slowed—or, rather, one could say, completely stagnated.

“Now is the time to make a breakthrough! Now I will open the way to victory!” With this spirit, I decisively rose into action, making it my mission to fulfill my mentor’s expectations.

When taking on a new position, the first three months are decisive. Results are determined by the energy exerted at the start of any endeavor.

I recall the kick-off held at a community hall in Unoki, Ota Ward, just after my appointment in Kamata Chapter. We pledged there to advance like a mighty wave. I first of all proposed to the frontline leaders that we set a concrete goal: to increase our membership by two new households per unit during the month of February.

The first step in any challenge is to set clear goals. If the goals are vague, people will find them difficult to relate to and take on as a personal challenge. Consequently, they will not make serious efforts to realize those goals.
At the same time, it is important not to impose goals on others. Goals must be presented in such a way that everyone can accept them and be enthusiastic about realizing them.

To that end, the central figure must have the firm resolve to take personal responsibility to achieve the intended target, even if he or she has to do it alone. The passion and enthusiasm emanating from such leaders inspires others to give their all for kosen-rufu.

We had just reorganized the Soka Gakkai into chapters, districts, groups and units, in descending order of size. The unit was at the very front line of the organization, corresponding to what we in Japan now call the block level.

President Toda wanted to give the frontline leaders confidence and a sense of personal responsibility; I, too, was convinced that this was crucial for the Soka Gakkai’s development.

I wanted the nearly 100 unit leaders in Kamata Chapter to take the starring roles and to be victorious. Instead of one person advancing a hundred steps, a hundred people would advance one step forward. I prayed earnestly and worked tirelessly within the chapter, determined that not even one unit would fall to the wayside, that each member would experience benefit in faith.

The key to victory lies in uncovering fresh talent within the organization and pooling their abilities. The word organization tends to bring to mind an image of a monolithic, impersonal structure. However, in the Soka Gakkai, people are valued first and foremost.

All the leaders in Kamata Chapter—including group and district leaders—participated in unit-level activities. Discussion meetings were also held on the unit level, because this allowed for warmer, more personal encounters. In these smaller settings, it was possible to properly address individual problems and concerns through one-on-one dialogue.

Each person who was inspired with fresh resolve at these unit-level meetings rose up courageously to propagate the Law.

Merely ordering people about will not inspire them to action. This is even more so considering that people are emotional beings.
If people feel put-upon and act only out of a sense of obligation, they are not going to display their true power. When I took on my leadership responsibilities in Kamata, I was only 24. How was I going to inspire everyone to take action with genuine enthusiasm and purpose? I would do it through my own actions, through my own sweat and hard work, through producing actual results.

I had resolved to take full responsibility for reaching our goal. I felt sure that if I became a good example, the members would appreciate my efforts and place their trust in me.

I stood up resolutely, as befitting a youth and a disciple of President Toda, and wholeheartedly exerted myself: “Watch me! Just watch my actions!” The Daishonin writes, “You need not seek far for an example” (WND, 614). It is our own example of personal struggle—not somebody else’s—that produces sympathy and understanding in those around us.

As a chapter advisor, I worked closely together with Kamata Chapter Leader Takashi Koizumi toward realizing President Toda’s vision. The position of chapter advisor was a support role, much like that of a vice leadership position today.

In that capacity, it was my function to assist the chapter leader, based on the same shared ideals and objectives. I strove with the spirit “I will support the chapter leader, so that we become the best chapter in Japan!” I made every effort to forge myself into a model chapter advisor.

As an ancient philosopher said, it is not the position that ennobles a person, but a person who ennobles the position. In other words, it is not the position that makes a person shine; it is the person who makes the position shine.

To think that an organizational position makes one important is a sign of authoritarianism. That is the behavior of someone who swaggers about cloaked in borrowed authority. Ultimately, this attitude only degrades the position’s value.

A month later, the results from our February campaign were presented. Kamata Chapter came in at No. 1, with 201 new mem-
ber households!

Until that time, most chapters were unable to achieve even 100 new member households in a month. We had totally broken through that barrier and created a tremendous victory. We had achieved our unprecedented goal of introducing two new households per unit. Everyone was astonished.

No matter how difficult or painful the challenges along the way, once the goal is achieved, everything is transformed into joy and satisfaction.

Everyone was radiant with happiness and delight. Some unit leaders literally danced for joy. Nothing could have made me happier.

While I have written many times before on this February Campaign—the 50th anniversary of which we will mark next year—I have taken the liberty of doing so once again, in view of its significance in the history of our movement.

The German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote that as human beings our “first task is to be active.” To all of you, the noble leaders of kosen-rufu, I say, “Let us take action!”

Having adorned the first page of the 21st century with total victory, please continue to boldly write a history of personal growth and wonderful benefit in faith!
The Nobel Prize-winning American author Pearl Buck wrote that the secret of life is “to begin a new day with courage and with the belief that it can be made the best of all days, whatever change it brings.”

It was July 6, 1945. The climb up the hilly street in what is now Nishikata in Tokyo’s Bunkyo Ward was painful and exhausting for our mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda. It was only three days after his release from prison.

President Toda was on his way to confer with a friend living in Bunkyo about restoring his businesses—the first step to building a new foundation for the Soka Gakkai, which had been almost completely destroyed by the repressive policies of Japan’s militarist government.

Two years in prison had seriously impaired President Toda’s health and sapped his strength. The summer suit he wore hung loosely on his tall, thin frame. But his eyes were fixed firmly on the future and burned with fierce determination.
It is fair to say that Bunkyo is the place from which President Toda launched his great, lifelong struggle for kosen-rufu. Indeed, not only President Toda, but also Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai’s founder, had a connection to Bunkyo Ward.

President Makiguchi regularly visited the home of the famous educator and writer Nitobe Inazo in Kohinata, Bunkyo Ward, to attend meetings of the Kyodo-kai, a study and research group on the subject of Japanese regional and folk culture.

In addition, exactly 100 years ago, when President Makiguchi published his landmark work, A Geography of Human Life, at age 32, he was residing in Bunkyo’s Komagome area. This epic volume was completed after many indescribable challenges and hardships while living there with his family in cramped quarters.

Bunkyo thus can claim profound ties to both our first and second presidents.

Fifty years ago, in April 1953, I was appointed acting chapter leader of Bunkyo Chapter and threw myself headlong into creating a fresh groundswell for kosen-rufu there.

Bunkyo was one of the 12 original Soka Gakkai chapters, but at that time its growth had stagnated. Chapter Leader Tsugiko Tanaka was extremely concerned, and she tearfully explained the distressing situation to President Toda.

He always took swift action. “I will dispatch my right-hand man,” he said, and immediately appointed me acting chapter leader.

No one must fall by the wayside in the long journey of kosen-rufu. We must all climb the summit of victory together. For that reason, it is crucial that we encourage those facing the most painful struggles, those in regions where the situation is the most challenging.

On that unforgettable night, I turned off Shinobazu Avenue onto a side street and, after wandering through winding, narrow alleyways, visited Mrs. Tanaka’s very old, almost ramshackle home. I remember with nostalgia how hard it was to find.

My “Bunkyo Revolution” started the moment I walked into that room where the Bunkyo Chapter leaders had gathered. When I led
them in chanting Nam-myoho-rengyokyo three times, the members’ voices were not together. This was a sign they were not united in their struggle for kosen-rufu. I repeated chanting three times again and again until they could do it in unison.

Chanting Nam-myoho-rengyokyo is not some empty formality. It is the most important weapon of spiritual champions, the most powerful weapon in the universe. When we chant in unity, with a common purpose, we can create an invincible alliance dedicated to the cause of good and justice. Distracted chanting is like an out-of-focus camera lens. When members’ minds are not united, they cannot summon their full strength or produce positive results.

True unity is not achieved by self-sacrifice, demanding that we suppress or kill our individuality; rather, it is attained by expanding our inner state of life, breaking out of the tiny shell of our lesser ego. It is a struggle in which we unite in purpose toward a lofty goal, each of us striving to make the most of our unique talents and abilities. That is why faith based on the principle of “many in body, one in mind” leads to development, victory and happiness.

More than anything, I wanted our Bunkyo members to have self-confidence. I reminded them that we were engaged in realizing kosen-rufu, a momentous endeavor beyond the abilities of the most powerful political leader, the richest tycoon. There could be no greater source of pride or glory than this.

Just because the Bunkyo members could not introduce Buddhism to as many people as they wished, there was no reason for them to become dispirited or depressed. They were all Bodhisattvas of the Earth. They were worthy champions of kosen-rufu gathered with a mission from the beginningless past. (See “The Bodhisattvas Who Emerged From the Earth,” p. 3).

Stand tall, my friends! Fight on, with no regrets!

At our first meeting, I suggested an unprecedented goal. “We can do it!” I told them. “You have not tried your hardest yet. Besides, you have the Gohonzon. United in our struggle under President Toda’s leadership, there is nothing we cannot accomplish!”

It was not that the members were incapable. The problem was
negativity and failure to use the capability they possessed.

The human brain, in the cerebral cortex alone, is said to have some 14 billion neurons. Its potential is unlimited. But we usually employ only a tiny portion of that potential—some scientists suggest less than 10 percent.

Life itself is an untapped treasure trove. As each of us truly awakens to our mission and stands up resolutely, a sense of gratitude and joy wells forth along with an inexhaustible fighting spirit.

My role in seeing that this took place was to offer sincere encouragement and inspiration to our Bunkyo members.

I traveled to each area of Bunkyo Chapter. I wanted to do everything I could to encourage my fellow members, with whom I had deep ties.

Each was a precious person for kosen-rufu. Each had a profound mission. I wanted everyone, without exception, to stand up as a great champion of kosen-rufu.

At times, I would place my hands on the shoulders of a young man and, in a way to shake his very being, say: “Let’s work together! Let’s win in life and raise a cheer at our success!” And at other times I would say to a woman, “Please become a victor for your family’s sake and help them all lead happy lives.”

Nameless, ordinary citizens helping others—nothing is more wonderful than this.

Many people have succumbed to apathy and hopelessness in these dark times. How admirable is the sight of nameless heroes plunging into society’s midst and striving to turn people’s hearts in the direction of happiness and joy—far more admirable than the splashy but essentially empty displays of many celebrities.

Victory or defeat in life is determined at the final moment. In life’s final chapter, the verdict is strictly delivered. People of faith who have unequalled pride in their profound mission are certain to complete their lives in brilliant triumph.

My friends, never grow cowardly and seek to escape reality. For all that will remain is eternal regret. Please let the splendor of your
lives, the light of your struggles, shine forth amid the raging waves of society.

My friends, do not fall prey to fear and become prisoners of misfortune. Become happy!

Become victors! Become heroes who illuminate all with the light of joy!

Even when a new day dawns, society, with its harsh realities, remains dark. Life is about triumphing amid that bleak, merciless gloom.

No matter how dark the depths of your karma may seem at times, use the power of profound faith to overcome your weak-heartedness and summon forth your courage. It is vital that you win, that you fight on bravely to surmount all obstacles, cherishing bright hope in your heart.

Toss baseless criticisms to the wayside. Ignore jealous rumors and move on. This is the way of a true champion.

Bunkyo Chapter was reborn as a beautiful family allied for truth and justice, going on to establish a record among our chapters for introducing the most new members—a golden achievement in Soka Gakkai history that shines even more brightly today.

A life dedicated to kosen-rufu is magnificent indeed, a victorious drama of incomparable pleasure and enjoyment! My beloved Bunkyo members, the second chapter in the Bunkyo revolution has now begun with immense vigor.

Rise up as great philosophers! Take action as outstanding thinkers!

It is crucial that not one of you be defeated. Rather than chasing dreams of idle pleasure, triumph as great spiritual champions who win life’s highest honors!
SAPPORO CAMPAIGN:
In a Short Term Campaign, Win with Speed!

Excerpts from President Ikeda’s essay: 50 years from the “Sapporo Summer Campaign” (tentative translation)

The general Napoleon cried out: “I won’t take two days to do something which I can accomplish in two hours,” and also, “Whether or not we can be successful in any major work, is determined by a narrow difference.”

The memories of the summer of 52 years ago ring in my heart. History moved in ten days. This was a historic struggle that occurred in 1955, which is now known as the “Sapporo Summer Campaign.”

It was a short, ten-day win-or-lose battle that began August 16th. As the person responsible for a group dispatched to Hokkaido (northern part of Japan) for the summer guidance trip, I led this campaign in which we shakubukued 388 households in just 10 days, marking the foremost result in Japan.

With a smile, President Toda said, “Daisaku. You did it again.”
You created the foremost history of propagation in Japan.” I was happy.

The first and foremost key in winning in a short campaign lies in “unity.” The shorter our campaign, the more we need to pull ourselves together and unite.

The fellow members of Hokkaido and I were nobly and firmly connected with each other with a “powerful determination as disciples” to absolutely accomplish President Toda’s dream of 750 thousand households.

What determines victory in our campaigns for kosen-rufu is not the number of people. Rather, it is the united based on the spirit of ‘many in body but one in mind’ in which we all share a common vow.

Nichiren Daishonin asserts: “...although Nichiren and his followers are few, because they are different in body, but united in mind, they will definitely accomplish their great mission of widely propagating the Lotus Sutra.”

The 700,000 soldiers led by King Chou of Yin (who was a tyrant), was defeated by 800 united soldiers led by King Wu of Chou.

It is said that the soldiers, who were forced by the ill-minded King Chou to go out and fight, lacked any fighting spirit; they held their weapons reversely, opening up a path for King Wu’s forces.

The second key to victory lies in “making a dash at the start.” In a track race, the shorter the distance of a race, the more crucial it becomes how we start the race. In a 100 meter race, victory or defeat is determined at the tense moment when the signal gun is fired.

My fighting spirit blazed from the moment I stepped down on Sapporo Station, 50 years ago.

“We have won our battle!” These were my first words to those who came to greet me at the station.

From day one, I took action on a full-fledged scale. A bar graph [to indicate our results] was already displayed when I arrived at the lodging which became the base of our campaign. We were completely prepared.

“We will have the upper hand if we get a head start.”
If we lose the initiative, we will double the burden we must shoulder and take twice as long. On the other hand, if we take the initiative, the time we must spend is halved, and the effect is doubled. President Toda often said: “Even a fleet can never win over a troop that is faster in speed if it should arrive late to the battleground.”

The shorter the campaign is, seizing the initiative becomes even more indispensable.

The third key point is that in a short campaign, victory is determined by the “keen determination” of the central figure. Before the “Sapporo Summer campaign,” I thoroughly continued to pray and exert my wisdom. I took lightning speed action based on concrete tactics. Back then, we were limited in our methods of communication. The main way to communicate was through writing letters.

While engaging in a campaign in Tokyo, I took the pen and wrote, devoting every spare moment. I continue to wholeheartedly write letters to my friends in Hokkaido, severely competing with time. I headed for Hokkaido after completing preparations with the determination to ensure that the desperate efforts made by my fellow members are absolutely connected to victory.

The formula to win in a campaign lies in our “perseverance” and “tenacity.” We must blaze with the resolve to win, no matter what. President Toda was also always strong in his will, saying, “even in a fight, the one that throws even one more stone than the opponent will win.”

Lastly, a battle is won by wisdom.

At any rate, in a short term campaign, the only option is to run with all our might until we reach our goal. If this was a 100 meter race run by the world’s fastest athletes, it would only take approximately ten seconds. They must run wholeheartedly without looking to the sides. We cannot possibly win if we are swayed by the situation of those around us.

We do not need to fear. In a campaign, you will not know what it will be like until you actually engage in it… Those who have a powerful and positive spirit will win. The more challenging our campaign, the more it requires speed. By taking quick action, we
can breakthrough devilish functions and protect the members. Leaders without speed are irresponsible. They are cowardly and lack compassion. After all, action taken with lightning speed at the crucial moment is the ironclad rule for victory.
There is always a clear reason why those who continually succeed and triumph do so. Our members in Kansai have a surefire formula for scoring absolute victory.

First—
They all share the same spirit and commitment as their mentor. When you unite your heart with a great teacher of kosen-rufu, strength will well forth and a path forward will be opened without fail.
When your heart, your resolve, is in sync with that of your mentor, you can manifest your inherent power and potential without limit.

Second—
They employ the “strategy of the Lotus Sutra.”
They have strong, resolute faith to pray powerfully “as though to produce fire from damp wood, or to obtain water from parched ground.”
Basing themselves on the Gosho, the eternal teachings for unceasing victory, they achieve great triumphs by bringing the wisdom of Buddhism, which can respond to all circumstances, to shine vibrantly in society.

Third—
They possess the strong and beautiful unity of “many in body, one in mind.”
In egalitarian Kansai, no one is above or below. All are equal based on the shared bonds of mentor and disciple. All are humble foot soldiers working for the great desire of kosen-rufu. Hence they are able to advance dynamically toward victory. They refuse to put up with cunning leaders, arrogant leaders, self-serving, irresponsible individuals, who disrupt the harmonious community of true, pure-hearted practitioners.
Fourth—
They have the courage to
“refute the erroneous
and reveal the true.”
They actively take on
formidable adversaries
who seek to destroy Buddhism,
“raising their voices all the more
and admonishing [slander of the Law],”
just as the Daishonin urges.
They speak out for what is right,
hitting back with ten words of truth
for every word of malicious falsehood.
“The voice does the Buddha’s work”—
this is the essence of Buddhism.
The sound of voices of valor
are the exhilarating driving force
of undefeated victory.

Fifth—
They act with lightning speed.
They are incredibly swift
in their communications and reporting,
which are the organization’s lifelines.
They coordinate seamlessly
with their voices and with their hearts.
Their ability to unite as one
is the hallmark of Mighty Kansai’s agility
and its alert, ever-victorious organization.
They don’t idle or dawdle,
but move with a vibrant, responsive spirit.
This is because they always
share the clear sense of purpose
of fighting to win for the sake of good.
Sixth—
They all put action first.
They are all self-reliant lions
of practice over theory,
who take personal responsibility for victory.
There are no faint-hearted
passive bystanders among them.
This is because they keenly recognize
that as members of Ever-victorious Kansai
they themselves must always be victorious.

Seventh—
They are firmly determined to win,
proclaiming, “We can’t afford to lose!”
Our friends in Kansai
know too well the bitter taste of defeat.
They have the pride
of the “Kansai spirit”—
a passionate challenging spirit
to fight and strive fiercely
to the very end.
This inner resolve,
pervading three thousand realms,
powerfully activates the workings
of the protective forces of the universe
characterized by Brahma and Shakra.
BEING EVER-VICTORIOUS EACH AND EVERY DAY

This essay was published in the “Thoughts on The New Human Revolution” series in the July 14 Seikyo Shimbun, the Soka Gakkai’s daily newspaper.

SGI members around the world are filled with admiration for Kansai—no, more than admiration, awe! Our Tokyo members are deeply grateful for the enthusiastic friendship and support of their fellow Kansai members.

Kansai is strong! Osaka is strong! Our great, Ever-victorious Kansai is an invincible domain of the people, an undefeated victor peerless in all the world.

The Kansai members possess the spirit of mentor and disciple. No one can ever sever the spiritual ties between the Kansai members and I, the shared commitment to fight passionately to realize kosen-rufu. Nor will we ever allow the sullied hands of authoritarian powers to touch this precious bond.

Everything begins and ends with the mentor–disciple relation-
ship—this is the spirit that has built Ever-victorious Kansai.

When Josei Toda became the second president of the Soka Gakkai 50 years ago, in 1951, one of the first things I said to him was “For the future development of kosen-rufu in Japan, we should give top priority to constructing a chapter in Osaka, the capital of the people.” President Toda replied on the spot: “All right. If that’s what you think, Daisaku, you go to Osaka and build the chapter there.”

The construction of our organization in Kansai began from this unity of spirit between mentor and disciple. At the time, we had hardly any members in Osaka, and the top Soka Gakkai leaders never even dreamed of establishing a chapter there.

But President Toda had declared that he would achieve a membership of 750,000 households. [The total membership then was a little more than 3,000 people.] And I was President Toda’s disciple. As such, I thought long and hard, with the enthusiasm and idealism of youth, about what was necessary to realize the widespread propagation of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. And it was this that prompted me to make my suggestion of establishing a chapter in Kansai.

While Tokyo is Japan’s political and administrative capital, Osaka—indeed, all of Kansai—is its commercial capital. If we could establish a strong base for kosen-rufu there, I thought, the ripples of its forward momentum would undoubtedly spread to other areas such as Chugoku, Shikoku, Kyushu and eventually all of Japan.

The following year, 1952, the beginnings of Osaka Chapter took form. I went to Osaka on Aug. 14 of that year, and President Toda followed the next day, to kick off our summer regional propagation campaign and take the first step toward the full-fledged development of our organization in Osaka. [There were only some 40 members in Osaka at the time.]

While reporting to President Toda day and night, I worked steadily to attain victory. The Kansai members united together in high spirits and threw themselves into the campaign. Their eyes sparkled with life, and their whole beings brimmed with hope and
President Toda clearly stated his purpose for going to Osaka: “Let us rid Osaka of all sickness and poverty!” This was a solemn declaration to wipe the tears of unhappiness and suffering from the eyes of the Osaka people. I made his vow my own. To achieve that goal, I would have to dedicate myself earnestly to propagating the Mystic Law and imparting courage to many people, so that they could lead happy lives.

The aim of a true religion is to free people from the chains of suffering. A living religion helps people transform misery into happiness. Religion should not function as a mere source of solace or sympathy, nor as an “opiate” that offers an escape from reality.

As a result of this determination, strong, courageous individuals, who had awakened to a new way of living and found a new social awareness, stood up to work for the reform and betterment of the society in which they lived. As citizens, they had every right to construct a humane society, a society that served their needs.

“We must build Osaka—a city of honest, industrious people—into a capital of happiness, overflowing with goodwill.” This was my determination as a young lion of 28 who, from the start of 1956, began to take more leadership in the construction of Ever-victorious Kansai. Together with the Kansai members, I launched a concerted effort—a struggle of faith and kosen-rufu—to achieve that goal. [In January 1956, President Ikeda was dispatched by President Toda to lead activities in Osaka Chapter, centering on discussion meetings. In May 1956, he and the Osaka members achieved a monthly propagation record—11,111 households—unprecedented in the annals of kosen-rufu.]

An Upper House election was slated for July that year, and the Soka Gakkai Headquarters had decided to field its own candidate in the Osaka regional district.

Whether or not to field a candidate had been an extremely tough choice for the Headquarters. Everyone thought it was a race that could not be won. Both inside and outside the Soka Gakkai, many were saying that it was a rash move and doomed to failure.

But I made a firm pledge to my mentor: “No matter what ob-
stacles we may face, I promise you we will win. I will bring you a victory, Sensei!”

On President Toda’s birthday (Feb. 11) that year, I composed a poem for him expressing my determination. And he responded with lightning speed. It was an exchange between mentor and disciple that I will never forget, as long as I live.

I want now to offer the poem I sent him to our members in Kansai, with renewed meaning.

*The golden citadel*
*Now being built*
*In Kansai*
*Will be eternally imperishable,*
*Forever subduing the devilish forces.*

Allow me also to share with you the poem that President Toda responded with that day:

*The joy of looking up*
*At the golden citadel*
*Built*
*By my disciple*
*Through his propagation activities.*

The first president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, offers this profound guidance: “Although there is a saying that even dust, when it accumulates, can form a mountain, there are in fact no mountains that have been made from accumulated dust... Real mountains are formed by sudden, dramatic shifts in the earth’s crust.” President Makiguchi strictly teaches us here that we can only fundamentally transform ourselves and build an unshakable state of life by engaging in an earnest struggle of great good against great evil.

If we must fight, let it be a towering struggle! Let us win an explosive victory, a overwhelming victory!

I had only one mission—to build an undefeatable golden cita-
del in Kansai. To do so, was determined to give my entire life and resolutely triumph.

But the sheer size of the goal that President Toda had set made it an undertaking physically impossible for a single individual to achieve alone. I therefore resolved to put 100-percent effort into meeting with the Kansai members, into encouraging them, into spurring them on and into raising them to be courageous champions of kosen-rufu who would work with me in this struggle.

And I translated this into action. I was certain that my burning determination—the passionate flame of the human spirit that could make the impossible possible, beyond imagination—would definitely spread and set alight the hearts of many others.

I wanted to win. I had to win. Winning and then reporting that victory to my mentor was my supreme mission as a disciple; it was the actual practice of the oneness of mentor and disciple.

I chanted sincerely day after day to have the strength to achieve my goal. I chanted continuously with the firm conviction that everyone I came in contact with would become an ally of our movement or would function as a protective force.

Our propagation efforts in Osaka in 1956, which our members throughout Japan were watching expectantly, gained dynamic, explosive momentum, day by day, month by month.

The energy and tenacity of the leaders determine the organization’s overall momentum. I boldly took the initiative, throwing my entire being into the struggle. I never hesitated, staying constantly on the go and speaking without rest. I spent every day, from early morning until late at night, encouraging our members in every corner of Osaka.

There were times when I attended 25 or 26 meetings in a single day, always on the move, always telling myself: “I have time for one more.” “I can encourage more members.” I was drenched with sweat, my voice was hoarse from speaking, and my legs felt like cement.

There were so many people I had to meet, so many people I wanted to see and encourage, so many people I wanted to contact.
within the limited time of each 24-hour day. If I let this moment, this opportunity, pass by, I might never be able to see this person again. That is why I was desperate to make the most of every second.

If someone pointed out a member’s house to me, while I was traveling from one meeting place to another, I would always try to stop by, even if just for a minute. Whenever a member came to the Kansai Headquarters, I would always try to make time to speak with him or her, even if just a word of greeting or encouragement. At times when I simply could not stop, I would wave or acknowledge people with my eyes, silently sending daimoku to them from my heart.

I knew that if our hearts touched for even a moment, we could forge a connection for Buddhism; if I just passed by without reaching out, nothing of value would be created.

Human revolution is meeting with people. Kosen-rufu is talking with people. These actions embody courage, wisdom and compassion.

Wherever I went, exciting dramas of life-to-life inspiration and communion unfolded, giving rise to expanding waves of joy.

If I stopped by the home of a local leader but he or she happened to be out, I always left a message of encouragement with their family. And as I made the rounds of the local meeting places—usually the members’ homes—I would take up my writing brush and present the members with pieces of calligraphy, hoping to encourage them in any way I could. I would write things like “Decisive Battle,” “Courageous Struggle” and “Great Triumph.”

In a flash, a wave of fellowship spread. And a ready, responsive fighting spirit to work together for the common cause of kosen-rufu was soon established. All my trusty fellow members in Osaka grasped my aims and determinations. They rose up and exerted themselves tirelessly alongside me, sharing both joys and sufferings.

I read countless passages from the Daishonin’s writings together with the Kansai members. Among them was “One day of life is more valuable than all the treasures of the major world system”
(The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, p. 955).

Let us do all we can on this precious, irreplaceable day that is today, so that we have no regrets, and devote our lives to kosen-rufu and the happiness of humanity! Being ever-victorious means winning resolutely in the present; it means winning today.

Making their way through arduous trials in perfect accord with this spirit of the Daishonin, the Kansai members finally triumphed! In May of that turbulent 1956, we realized the magnificent monthly record of enabling 11,111 new households to receive the Gohonzon. This achievement firmly secured the foundation of the golden citadel of kosen-rufu in Kansai.

And in the Upper House election that July—the first Upper House election in which the Soka Gakkai fielded candidates—our Kansai members, working in close teamwork, won a tremendous victory [with their candidate in the Osaka regional district] that brought applause and cheers from their fellow members throughout Japan.

That victory would stir up a storm of persecution on the part of scheming, treacherous authorities in July 1957, in a manner just as the Daishonin warns. This was, of course, the Osaka Incident that I wrote an essay about recently (see “The SGI: A Construction Project of the People,” Aug. 17 World Tribune).

My noble Kansai friends have reenacted that great struggle of 45 years ago time and time again, clearly establishing a brilliant history of continuous triumph. A new page of history of unending victory has once again begun in Kansai. Our victory in the very first year of this new century will become a lifeline for a succession of victories.

Great Kansai, be tenacious! Take one step of courage and integrity after another, until the very end! Ever-victorious Kansai, triumph in everything, never forgetting your honor and your mission—together with me! Trusting in the limitless potential of all human beings, in the spirit of the Daishonin’s treatise, “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.” We need to unite in that cause in order to dispel the sense of stagnation that
pervades society, believing in one another’s possibilities and working together to bring forth those capabilities.

The Daishonin gave a lecture on his treatise, “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land,” at the Ikegami residence in Ota Ward shortly before his death. Mr. Toda was lecturing on this same writing when I first met him at a discussion meeting in Kamata, Ota Ward. Similarly, it was from Ota, a place of such profound and wondrous connections, that, 60 years ago, the February Campaign, through the power of ordinary people, created a movement of dialogue and solidarity for peace and happiness based on the ideals and principles of Nichiren Buddhism. And now once again, my beloved fellow members everywhere are engaged in a new February Campaign, striving earnestly to share the Daishonin’s teachings with others, day after day.

At this most meaningful time, let’s all strive energetically with youthful hearts, together with the youth! Let’s joyously and victoriously usher in a new age of a youthful SGI, holding high the banner of “establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.”

*The destined time has come at last.*

*May the sun always shine on the heroic Bodhisattvas of the Earth in their endeavors.*
The woman’s experience was only an event in the small realm of a single family. But it speaks of the boundless potential such an event can have to change society itself.

The family is a “garden” of value-creation built through the joint efforts of its members. It is an oasis of tranquility and revitalization that restores one’s energy and vigor to face the new day. It may also be described as the soil in which human character is cultivated.

The family is the foundation of society. There can be no social prosperity unless the family is solid. Likewise, without peace in society, the family cannot enjoy true happiness. In this equation lies the formula for world peace.

The woman who gained the ability to give affection ungrudgingly to her stepchildren most likely became equally able to love other people, even strangers. If the creative energy that brought harmony and happiness to one family were turned toward society, it would
without doubt become a tremendous force for peace. Shin’ichi Yamamoto felt that if there existed in every family a woman with a warm, sunny presence, then society, too, undoubtedly would be bathed in light and warmth.

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The world’s major powers, Shin’ichi continued, those nations that ought to have been leading the world in a positive direction, were instead plunging humankind into the depths of fear and anxiety with their deployment of nuclear weapons. Even in Japan, leaders whose primary responsibility should have been to protect people’s rights had become intoxicated by power.

Shin’ichi then addressed the cause of this state of affairs: “Why is there no end to the misery and unhappiness that plague Japan and the rest of the world? The answer to this question becomes clear when we examine it in light of Nichiren Buddhism: Neither society’s leaders nor the people who make up and support society possess any solid guiding principles or philosophy. Or, if they do have a philosophy, it is not a great philosophy rooted in life itself, not one capable of making happiness a reality for oneself and others.

“In contrast, we of the Soka Gakkai embrace Nichiren Daishonin’s perfect, faultless philosophy of life, by which we can achieve human revolution and create peace in society and the world. Let us therefore continue to pro-claim boldly that this magnificent philosophy is the highest guiding principle for human happiness.”

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As youth division chief of staff, Shin’ichi’s responsibility was to carefully consider the direction the Soka Gakkai was taking in all of its endeavors. Josei Toda expected a great deal of Shin’ichi on this score. That is why Mr. Toda was so determined to communicate to Shin’ichi his conclusions on the subject of the fusion of secular law and the Law of the Buddha, an issue the Soka Gakkai was certain to confront in the future.

President Toda continued, “The concept of the fusion of secular
law and the Law of the Buddha most certainly does not mean that government and Buddhism should be institutionally joined. We must consider the meaning of this concept from the perspective of the Daishonin’s complete statement in ‘On the Receiving of the Three Great Secret Laws,’ which is: ‘When the secular law and the Law of the Buddha are fused and in mutual accord.’ The Chinese character for fused here has the meanings ‘deep,’ ‘profound’ and ‘recondite.’ In other words, it is completely different from unity of a surface or institutional nature. It means secular law and the Law of the Buddha, or principles of Buddhism, coming together on a profound level and firmly establishing the spirit and philosophy of Buddhism as the basis of all spheres of human activity. Of course, by this I mean the philosophy and ideals of Buddhism taking root in the heart and mind of each person, for it is people who create society and culture.

“Looking now at the second half of the passage, ‘and in mutual accord,’ I feel this means the spirit of Buddhist philosophy becoming manifest in each individual’s life and behavior, so that secular affairs—that is, society itself—are completely in accord with the way of Buddhism.

“Simply put, Buddhist philosophy teaches that because each person is a treasure tower and a child of the Buddha, human life is precious beyond all else, and every individual has the right to happiness. It also represents the compassion necessary to help everyone realize this goal of happiness.

“Buddhism is a philosophy of human revolution, through which individuals reveal their inherent Buddha-hood and establish autonomous, creative and indomitable selves that can deal with any situation life has to offer. The essential principles of Buddhism can be described as the sanctity of life, the equality of all people and freedom—all ideals that uphold human rights and make possible the realization of true democracy.

“The guiding principle that the Daishonin espoused for building a sound society lies in establishing these Buddhist principles in the heart of each individual and thereby cultivating and enriching that person’s character. The natural consequence of this is the fusion of
secular law and the Law of the Buddha.

“In other words, it is impossible to discuss concepts like the fusion of secular law and the Law of the Buddha and establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land as something separate from the lives of living individuals. This means that human revolution, which positively transforms the heart and mind—the very life—of the individual, is most crucial.”

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Shin’ichi then spoke of the basic principle of transforming “the realm of the environment”: “The ‘Life Span’ (16th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra teaches the theory of the three mystic principles—True Cause, True Effect and True Land.

“This theory states that the True Cause—the fundamental cause for attaining Buddhahood—is mystic and unfathomable. The True Effect is the enlightenment that one acquires through Buddhist practice. The True Land is the place in which the Buddha dwells and acts. The Lotus Sutra expounds that this strife-filled saha world is the True Land in which the Buddha resides.

“Applying this teaching to our own lives, the True Cause means dedicating ourselves to Buddhist practice and carrying out our human revolution. The True Effect is realizing a state of absolute happiness. By doing so, the place where each of us lives becomes the True Land, the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light.

“Though we may speak about the country and society, the fact is that everything is governed by the principle of the oneness of life and its environment; in other words, everything comes down to the individual. The secret to transforming society is human revolution. As long as you and your fellow members continue chanting daimoku and making diligent efforts in faith, you will without a doubt be able to transform Okinawa into a model society of peace and prosperity.”

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Shin’ichi spoke further of the concept of government based on the Buddhist principle of the Middle Way: “Simply put, what we
are aiming for is a compassionate government that values humanity in accord with the philosophy of life of the Middle Way. To value humanity means valuing the distinct individuality of each person based on profound respect for the dignity of human life, and enabling each individual to enjoy a life of the greatest possible happiness. It means regarding all social organizations and cultural activities as existing for this purpose, and governing in a way that respects life. The ideal society we seek is one that is built on such principles.”

Shin’ichi went on to state that both capitalism and communism result in government that neglects the human being, losing sight of their original purpose of serving the people. This, he pointed out, was the fundamental cause of societal deadlock.

“In capitalist societies,” he elaborated, “the pursuit of profit is the primary goal, which in many cases leads to the sacrifice of individual happiness. In communist societies, the uniform economic system and totalitarian state harshly suppress individual liberty. As a result, it has become necessary for capitalist societies to implement reforms in order to reduce the sacrifice made by the people, and communist societies have been forced to enact major reforms to recognize individual freedoms.

“Clearly, the trend of the times is to seek a Middle Way government that bases itself on genuine humanism. I am convinced that we have entered the age when people throughout the world are yearning for the creation of a new society of peace and prosperity based on the philosophy of the Middle Way.”

Vigorous applause filled the auditorium. The members felt as if a dark veil had instantaneously been lifted from their eyes. Shin’ichi had illustrated that the society created through the Middle Way would be a new society founded on the principles of trust and harmony. He also argued that conflict between nations as well as various domestic conflicts all arose from a lack of mutual trust, and that the only way to overcome such discord was to foster a society built on trust and harmony.
Eventually, impressive benefits started to bloom in the lives of the members residing amid the mountains and rivers of Hida. After a while, the freight business set up by joint chapter leader Yoshizo Tsuchihata flourished, and his financial security was finally assured. When he retired, his son took over the business, allowing him to continue working spiritedly for kosen-rufu in Hida.

Some members became successful managers of local inns. Others surmounted family problems or illness. Each member in the region built a life of wonderful happiness.

Community development and revitalization are important issues anywhere, but they can be a matter of survival in underpopulated villages and mountainous regions. If, however, people lose faith in their community and give up hope, there can be no prosperity.

Community revival is born of the love people feel toward their hometown; it is inspired by each person’s awareness that he or she is a protagonist in that endeavor. In other words, the key to revitalizing a community is to revitalize the hearts of those who reside in it.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “All of the mountains, valleys and fields where Nichiren and his disciples live and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo are the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light” (GZ, 781). Wherever we are actively carrying out our Buddhist practice is the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light where the Buddha dwells.

That is why Soka Gakkai members, instead of searching for an ideal realm or happiness somewhere apart from reality, have lived out their lives with the conviction that the place where they are is essentially a treasured land. They have made it their personal philosophy and mission in life to transform that place into an ideal realm where they can raise the banners of happiness and victory, no matter what difficulties or hardships they face.

Realizing the prosperity of a community or region begins with transforming the mindsets of the people who live there and cultivating the earth of the human spirit. It is in such effort that a strong sense of community spirit is fostered, resulting in the
growth of luxuriant trees of progress, the blossoming of beautiful flowers of wisdom and the development of a fertile plain of happiness. This is the purpose of the Soka movement.

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What would it take to transform Tokyo into an ideal city that its residents could be truly proud of? Of course, such governmental measures as building affordable housing and controlling pollution were indispensable, but perhaps the most important prerequisite was fostering residents’ love for their community. As Nichiren states: “If the minds of living beings are impure, their land is also impure” (WND-1, 4). The key to the state of the environment in which people live is found in their minds or attitudes. It is also people who can move the government, and who can join together with shared goals and expand networks of friendship and unity. When citizens don’t care about the place they live, and become self-centered and negative, their community will also decline.

Shin’ichi strongly felt that Soka Gakkai members had a social responsibility to cultivate in the hearts of their fellow citizens a love for the community and an awareness that they are the protagonists in the construction and revitalization of their community. Sharing Shin’ichi’s spirit, the members of the young men’s and young women’s divisions strove to convey the image of Tokyo as an international city through their performance of “Construction” in the culture festival.”

**Vol 15, pp. 292–93**
In the car on the way to Misaki, Shin’ichi thought to himself: The world of the Soka Gakkai has many intangible treasures we can be proud of. Making them available to society and sharing them will be an important focus of our activities for the future, and Kanagawa is taking the lead.

For example, the Buddhist teaching that all people possess the Buddha nature affirms the dignity and equality of all human beings, and Soka Gakkai members manifest this principle in their daily lives. The Soka Gakkai also offers answers to life’s most
significant questions, such as what is genuine happiness and how we can overcome suffering. Furthermore, the Soka Gakkai is a solid network of people who care about and take on the problems of others as their own, chanting Nam-myoho-reng-kyo for their happiness, encouraging them and lending support, based on the Buddhist spirit of compassion. It is a precious new model of community. In contemporary society—where supreme value tends to be placed on wealth and possessions, human relationships are breaking down, and spiritual desolation is rampant—there is much people can learn from the Soka Gakkai.

Shin’ichi felt it was important to actively strive to reveal those aspects of the organization to the public and thus make a positive contribution to society. This needed to take place on the local level, he concluded, where Soka Gakkai members actually lived and worked.

Understanding Shin’ichi’s intent, the Kamakura members had made an all-out effort in the activities leading up to their festival with the awareness of being pioneers of community outreach. When we awaken to the mission we have to work for the betterment of the places where we live and society at large, and take action based on faith, our basic condition of life will be greatly elevated and we can exhibit tremendous strength. That is the teaching of Buddhism, and the reason the Kamakura Festival was such a remarkable success.

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“We must protect our families because they are where we actually create happiness, and are the fundamental place where capable people are nurtured. And it is important to protect our communities because they are the basis of our lives and the stage upon which we carry out kosen-rufu. The ideal realm of kosen-rufu exists nowhere apart from the community in which we live.”

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And to the men’s division: “Please make Nerima a model for all Tokyo by first setting a fine example in your workplace and com-
Midway through the event, Shin’ichi was overcome by a wave of exhaustion, but he just gripped the microphone harder and continued. As the Chinese writer Lu Xun wrote, “It is a joy to nurture others, even though one knows doing so means growing weaker and frailer, one drop of blood at a time.”

Shin’ichi also talked about the key to development, saying: “In order to break out of your shell and grow, you need to take on responsibility of your own accord. The bigger the responsibility you accept, the more expansive the life-state you will attain. I hope that you, the members of Nerima Ward, will think not only of your own organization, but take on the responsibility in everything you do to achieve victory for all Tokyo and Japan. It is the Soka Gakkai’s spirit of the unity of ‘many in body, one in mind’ to rush to the aid of those areas where members are having a tough time and to support and encourage them. That is also my spirit. Such determination itself will be the driving force that will make Nerima a model for the rest of Tokyo.

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“Nodding with determination, the men’s division leader then asked, “What kind of efforts should we make in order to contribute positively to our community?”

Shin’ichi replied immediately: “The important thing is for each member to have a clear idea of how they are helping the community. Instead of erecting a barrier between the Soka Gakkai and the public, we need to expand our circle of friendship based on faith and forge a harmonious network in the community. I hope you will make Setagaya a model of that endeavor and take the lead in revolutionizing all of Tokyo.”

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Shin’ichi Yamamoto knew that to build the Soka Gakkai’s organization in Tokyo into an indomitable bastion of kosen-rufu, it was necessary to not only strengthen all of Tokyo’s twenty-three wards,
but also the Tama region, known as Tokyo No. 2 Territory. Located on the outskirts of Tokyo, Tama was developing as a bedroom community for people commuting to the city, and its population was growing rapidly. There was little interaction, however, between the original residents of the area and the newcomers, while things were even worse among the newcomers themselves. The weakened community relations were, in several respects, preventing the area from truly flourishing. Building a new interpersonal network that was firmly rooted in the community and that linked residents’ hearts was indispensable for ensuring the future growth and development of kosen-rufu in the Tama area. Shin’ichi regarded this as an important mission of the Soka Gakkai.

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“It is the responsibility of Buddhist practitioners to create a model of human harmony in their community. Shin’ichi wished to help awaken the Ibaraki members to that mission.

Potted irises were blooming beautifully at the Ibaraki Sports Meet venue. During the group photo session that day, Shin’ichi offered four mottoes for fresh progress in Ibaraki. The first was “Ibaraki—land of seeking spirit.” People from Ibaraki were known to have a strong sense of right and wrong, while also being hot-tempered, argumentative and assertive.

If we are self-centered, we can’t grow in faith. That is why it is the way of life of Buddhists to, as Nichiren Daishonin says, “Become the master of your mind rather than let your mind master you” (WND-1, 486). It is in humbly and single-mindedly seeking the Law that personal growth and the expansion of kosen-rufu are achieved.

The second motto was “Ibaraki—land of unity.” Unity in the Soka Gakkai means a solidarity of minds that wish for kosen-rufu—that is, for the happiness of others and the prosperity of the community. It begins with opening one’s heart and respecting and caring for others. When that spirit spreads, it is possible to build a truly humanistic society and secure a bright future.
The Atsuta members were actively involved in their local community and worked hard to contribute to its prosperity. Gradually, Soka Gakkai members came to occupy many important positions in the community, such as president and director of the chamber of commerce and industry, director of the agricultural cooperative and associate director of the fisheries cooperative association.

In 1972, the Atsuta Greater Block (equivalent to today’s chapter) was established, and when Shin’ichi visited in September 1973, membership had grown to five blocks (present-day districts) with 213 member-households, or approximately one-fifth of the total population of the village. The Soka Gakkai members’ dedicated contributions to the community were a source of hope for the entire community.

For his part, Shin’ichi, wishing to support his mentor’s hometown, donated books to the local elementary and junior high schools and sent doctors and nurses to the area to offer medical advice to the residents. He wished wholeheartedly for the prosperity of Atsuta. Aware of his efforts, the people of the village gained a deeper understanding of the Soka Gakkai and came to feel quite proud that its former president Josei Toda hailed from their hometown.

This is what led to the community meeting to which Shin’ichi had been invited. He was happy and grateful for the profound sincerity of the villagers. He also wanted to praise and encourage the local Soka Gakkai members who had worked so hard for their community.

“My country’s greatest wealth is its people, finer and truer than the purest diamonds,” declared the great South African champion of human rights, Nelson Mandela.

The Soka Gakkai’s Year of Society, 1974, opened to an ongoing problem in the international economy precipitated by the fourth Arab-Israeli War in the Middle East and the oil shock.

At ten in the morning on January 1, New Year’s meetings were
held at the Soka Gakkai headquarters as well as community and culture centers throughout Japan. At these gatherings, which were also designated as world peace prayer meetings, members chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo sincerely for world peace and pledged, based on the principle that Buddhism manifests itself in society, to make positive contributions and demonstrate actual proof of faith in society.

The faces of members at every venue glowed with a burning resolve that now, in this trying period, was the time for them to stand up and, as Buddhists, bring hope, courage and vitality to their communities. With this vow in their hearts, they assembled joyously for the New Year’s meetings. Shin’ichi Yamamoto attended the meeting at the headquarters, where he read a passage from Nichiren’s writing “Great Evil and Great Good”: “When great evil occurs, great good follows. Since great slander already exists in our land, the great correct Law will spread without fail” (WND-1, 1119). With firm conviction, he then said: “Nichiren lived in a time of upheaval and turmoil—a time wracked by major earthquakes, internal strife and the invasion of Japan by the Mongol forces. Despite all this, however, he declared that it was not a time to be pessimistic, for it was in such an age that great good in the form of the widespread propagation of Buddhism would occur.

“We are now advancing kosen-rufu amid the worst economic crisis this country has faced since the end of World War II. Undoubtedly, many of you are experiencing indescribable hardships. But whatever obstacles may come your way, please have absolute confidence in Nichiren’s conviction that ‘When great evil occurs, great good follows.’ Let’s take this as an opportunity to make spirited and dynamic strides forward in our movement for kosen-rufu!”

The members responded boisterously in the affirmative to Shin’ichi’s encouragement. A sincere commitment to faith can transform all adversity into a springboard for fresh advancement.

Shin’ichi wanted to communicate to the members that in order to transform great evil into great good and realize kosen-rufu, it was crucial to practice and carry out faith in exact accord with the
Buddha’s teachings. He continued: “At the end of ‘On Practicing the Buddha’s Teachings,’ which emphasizes the importance of practicing with the spirit of not begrudging one’s life, Nichiren makes a point of instructing the letter’s recipient, ‘Keep this letter with you at all times and read it over and over’ (WND-1, 396). Allow me to share what the twenty-sixth high priest, Nichikan, had to say about this passage.”

Shin’ichi then quoted from Nichikan’s Commentary on “On Practicing the Buddha’s Teaching,” saying: “Though you might hang this passage around your neck or keep it tucked in your breast at all times, if you forget its meaning and do not practice shakubuku, you cannot be said to be keeping this letter with you. The minds of those who forget shakubuku and are not always mindful of the four dictums are identical to the minds of slanderers of the Law. If they are not practicing shakubuku with their mouths, it is the same as if their mouths are slandering the Law. If their bodies are not facing toward the Gohonzon with prayer beads in their hands, it is equal to their bodies slandering the Law.”

To carry out our practice of faith in accord with the Buddha’s teachings is neither a matter of observing formalities nor possessing an intellectual understanding of Buddhism. It is to make a profound vow to refute the erroneous and reveal the true, to speak out boldly for what is right, and to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. In other words, it means practicing Buddhism in the three categories of action—deeds, words and thoughts.

We must also deeply bear in mind that the Buddha’s teachings cannot be practiced halfheartedly. Forgetting our commitment to propagating Buddhism is equivalent to slandering the Law with our minds; failing to speak out and share Buddhism with others is equivalent to slandering Buddhism with our mouths; and neglecting to recite the sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is equivalent to slandering the Law with our bodies. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai’s founding president, said that failing to do good is equivalent to doing evil in terms of the consequences of one’s actions.

Although we may pretend to have strong faith, if we do not
practice with all our might, then that is the same as slandering the Law, and we cannot attain Buddhahood in this existence. For that reason, Shin’ichi felt, he needed to be strict when talking to his disciples about faith. He knew that if they were to veer from the path of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime because they did not understand the uncompromising strictness of Buddhism, it would be due to a complete lack of compassion on his part. He was determined not to allow even one of his precious fellow members to fall by the wayside.

Shin’ichi continued “Practicing in exact accord with the Buddha’s teachings is the fundamental spirit of the Soka Gakkai, and this is something we must never forget. Since its establishment, the Soka Gakkai has striven boldly and earnestly to practice just as Nichiren Daishonin instructs. We are the sole organization doing so today. And our members, who are dedicating themselves day and night to Soka Gakkai activities, are the embodiment of this all-important spirit. That makes us champions of correct faith, and as such the protective functions of the universe will without a doubt support and safeguard us in every aspect of our lives.”

Shin’ichi spoke with tremendous conviction. The frosty winds of inflation were buffeting Japan, but the members who gathered that day burned with courage and fighting spirit.

He concluded by saying: “In this Year of Society, the Soka Gakkai will strive to deepen and strengthen ties with the community through the promotion of cultural events and other public activities. The fundamental spirit of the Soka Gakkai, however, is practicing in accord with the Buddha’s teachings, and that must never change. In fact, the more we spread Nichiren Buddhism throughout society, the more crucial it is to deepen that spirit.

“Because you are the ones who will become the prime movers of kosen-rufu, I felt the need today to emphasize the importance of practicing according to the Buddha’s teachings.”

The meeting participants brimmed with firm resolve. They had celebrated the start of the New Year together, confirming the foundation of faith.
The credit union that Josei Toda ran was forced to suspend operations due to financial difficulties.

After the war, in the absence of a new president, Mr. Toda had borne full responsibility for rebuilding the Soka Gakkai as its general director. But if he remained in that position, it was likely that his business difficulties would have negative repercussions on the Soka Gakkai. Wishing to avoid that at all costs, at the conclusion of a lecture he gave on the Lotus Sutra at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Tokyo's Nishi-Kanda, he announced that he was stepping down as general director and named a successor.

The lecture participants were all surprised and astonished by this completely unexpected development. Shin’ichi could not hide how shaken he was by this. He worried about what would happen to the Soka Gakkai and kosen-rufu. He asked Mr. Toda if the new general director would become his mentor. Mr. Toda replied decisively: “No, not at all. I may cause you nothing but hardship, but I’ll always be your mentor.”

Shin’ichi really wanted to confirm this statement with his whole being. He was filled with indescribable joy about this affirmation that he was indeed Mr. Toda’s disciple.

On that day, he made Mr. Toda his mentor for life and pledged to protect him at whatever cost.

Shin’ichi was now a men’s division member. He wanted all men’s division members to actualize their vow of shared struggle with their mentor and dedicate their lives to the great purpose of kosen-rufu, as he had. He felt this way because he considered it to be the highest path of human existence. And, if they did so, the Soka Gakkai would be strong and flourish forever, without a doubt.

Men’s division members are strong. They are the golden pillars of their families, society and the Soka Gakkai. And the effort of men’s division members is a decisive factor in the struggle for the victory of kosen-rufu. That’s why Shin’ichi completely agreed with the proposal from the men’s division to make August 24 Men’s Division Day.
One of them asked: “Sensei, at present you are earnestly engaged in leading a great movement for Buddhist study. Does this mean that the time at last has come for Buddhism to become more widely accessible in Japanese society?”

Shin’ichi responded without hesitation: “Yes. It means the age has come when individuals will manifest and demonstrate the Buddhist teaching of humanism in every area of their lives. With that in mind, I am pouring my energies into fostering the members of the business professionals department. When all our members raise the banner of victory in society, we will have succeeded in establishing the correct teaching for the peace of the land.

“I want to see all of you become victorious champions, who will be able to pat one another on the back and congratulate one another on your shared triumph and a job well done.

Buddhism is manifested in society, and as such it is the mission of those who practice it to introduce Buddhist principles to their respective communities and be active participants of their times. This requires us to polish our character and gain the trust and respect of those around us. Human revolution—in other words, the positive transformation of one’s character—is the driving force for social change.

We must do the very best in our jobs and win the trust of others in our workplace, demonstrating proof of our Buddhist faith and practice. In our communities, we need to build broad networks of friendship, create harmony and happiness around us, and become suns of hope for the community. Buddhism shines in society through the character and life of each individual who practices it.

On the morning of February 2, 1977, Shin’ichi Yamamoto was at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, where he reviewed a schedule announcing the meetings that were to be held that day in the area around the headquarters. When he noticed that a business professionals division meeting was scheduled to take place at 6:30 in the evening at the Kosen (Kosen-rufu) Hall in the Soka Culture Center, he said to a leader nearby: “I’m going to attend this meeting. I
want to give my all to encouraging our noble members striving on the front lines of society.”

The business professionals division was established to provide an opportunity for members working in the same companies or professions to strive together to polish their faith and character and inspire one another to grow and become exemplary employees in their places of work. It was established on October 24, 1973, just eighteen days after the fourth Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East, which subsequently triggered the Oil Shock.

During the Soka Gakkai Headquarters Leaders Meeting held at the Nihon University Auditorium in Ryogoku, Tokyo, on October 24, 1973, the establishment of four specialized divisions was announced: the business professionals division, the housing complex division, the farming communities division and the executives division.

The housing complex division was for members who lived in housing complexes, and the farming communities division was for members engaged in agriculture or fishing professions. The executives division was for those with specialized skills or abilities shouldering major responsibilities as core members of society. All the divisions were established with the aim of contributing to society based on faith in Nichiren Buddhism.

The essential purpose of Buddhism is to show the correct path for people to serve others and society.

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Buddhism is a way of life. Winning the trust of those around us and demonstrating proof of victory in our workplaces directly leads to victory in our lives and in Buddhism. That’s why it’s essential to be freely active in our workplaces and communities.

Shin’ichi spoke, as if embracing his listeners: “In society, we must interact with all kinds of people and sometimes even attend the observances of other religions. We mustn’t be narrow- minded or close ourselves off. Instead, we should be wise and broad- minded, and actively reach out to and establish relationships with others. Nichiren Buddhism is a philosophy meant to benefit all.
“We mustn’t make faith into an excuse for walling ourselves off from society and becoming insular and self-righteous. Nor is there ever any need to allow our Buddhist faith to be a reason for conflict in our families or workplaces. That’s completely counterproductive. It’s vital to adopt a long-term perspective and always be warm and supportive of family members and co-workers, with their happiness as our goal. That’s how Buddhists live.”

Nichiren Buddhist organizations have been seen as extremist, prone to exclusionary and self-righteous behavior. In fact, before the World War II, groups claiming to represent the teachings of Nichiren committed acts of violence. This is an outrage that completely violates the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin, who regarded all individuals as possessing the Buddha nature and sought happiness for all. It represents a failure to understand that Buddhists should take care of their communities, as indicated by the principle of “Buddhism manifests itself in society.”

In closing, Shin’ichi emphasized the importance of common sense: “Members who incur the disdain of those around them through their extreme words and actions have one thing in common. They tend to be fiery for a brief moment, making a show of fervent faith, but they burn out just as quickly. The key to this practice, as the Daishonin states, is continuing: ‘To accept is easy; to continue is difficult. But Buddhahood lies in continuing faith’ (WND-1,471).

“Kosen-rufu happens when we persevere in building trust and friendship, gradually and continuously pressing forward in our workplaces and communities. In other words, behavior based on common sense is an expression of genuine faith.”

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Shin’ichi Yamamoto then began to talk about the basic approach that members should have as they advanced kosen-rufu in their communities: “Nichiren Buddhism is the Buddhism of sowing. It plants the seed for attaining Buddhahood, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, in the lives of living beings of the Latter Day of the Law who have never heard the true teachings of Buddhism. It is the great teach-
ing for leading all to genuine happiness by enabling them to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.

“Our actions, as practitioners of this Buddhism dedicated to our mission for kosen-rufu, must all be connected to this act of sowing. In other words, we need to cultivate an awareness that everything, from our daily Soka Gakkai activities to our attitudes and behavior in daily life, is part of this important task of sowing the seeds of the Mystic Law.

“It’s important to sincerely wish for the happiness of those who haven’t yet started practicing this faith or are opposed to it, to embrace them with a broadminded spirit and interact with them with a warm smile, trying to be their friends. This is the way that connections to Buddhism are formed and spread far and wide.”

Then Shin’ichi spoke of the mission of members of the farming communities division: “Though city life may look attractive, in fact, cities are becoming places without the beautiful greenery of trees or clean, fresh air to breathe. Many places are losing a true sense of community and becoming increasingly dehumanized environments. I know there are also various challenges in farming communities, but personally I’m almost envious of those who can spend their days away from the commotion of city life in the quiet and beauty of nature.

“In fact, you’re living in a wonderful environment that many people today wish could be theirs, and you have the opportunity to share the Mystic Law in your beloved hometowns. I hope you’ll be proud of that and lead lives of the firmest conviction.”

At the time, many farmers were considering quitting farming and going to find jobs in the cities. But, just a simple change in perspective and attitude can open the doors to an entirely new world. Shin’ichi wanted the farming communities division members to open their eyes and feel optimistic and uplifted.

Jiro Abe (1883–1959), a thinker hailing from the Tohoku region, said, “It is doubtful that a culture that has lost sight of the importance of the land and agriculture has the power to bring true happiness to its people.”
Shin’ichi foresaw and firmly believed that in the near future, the importance of farming communities would once again be recognized, and they would become the focus of people’s attention.

He said with confidence: “Society will be forced to focus on farming communities. If you make your families strong models of modern agriculture, they will become steadfast beacons illuminating the local community.

“Through your family members’ social interactions, the seeds of the Mystic Law will be sown and a firm foundation for kosen-rufu will be established. I would like to call on the farming communities division members to be beacons of their communities and beacons of the Soka Gakkai.

“Farming communities have various traditional ceremonies and customs. Our Buddhist faith and practice is based on the Gohonzon. Aside from that essential point, we follow the principle of adapting to local customs, valuing our local society, and employing our wisdom to expand friendship and trust in our communities.

“I also want each of you to become individuals filled with fortune, richly equipped with the qualities of tolerance and broad-mindedness.

“We mustn’t be narrow-minded and inflexible in our way of living. While remaining firmly based on the essence of our Buddhist faith and practice, please grow into attractive and open-minded leaders in your respective farming communities.”

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In a large housing complex, people of many different backgrounds come to live together. A housing complex is like a “small nation.” Shin’ichi hoped that the members of the housing complex division would bring together the housing complex residents through solid bonds of friendship and trust, building the foundation for a harmonious community.

In November 1995, he sent the housing complex division members ten concrete guidelines to put into practice as they strive to make their housing complexes into ideal communities where people communicate and genuinely feel a sense of appreciation for
one another.

Pray every day for the safety and security of your “small nation” (your housing complex).

Brighten your housing complex by greeting residents with a smile.

Be an example of common sense and good citizenship.
Be considerate of your neighbors and with a broad-minded, embracing attitude while striving to get along with them.
Promote friendship and lead a spiritually rich life.
Take the initiative in activities that contribute to the community.
Make your housing complex a lush, hope-filled place by protecting the natural environment.
Be considerate of the elderly and their safety, actively reach out to them and encourage them.
Work together to foster sound young people.
Promote cooperation and mutual understanding concerning ceremonial occasions, whatever the religious affiliation of such events.

These guidelines became important ideals for housing complex division members striving to promote the prosperity and happiness of their communities.

The disintegration of human relationships was becoming endemic in society as a whole, not just housing complexes, to the extent that Japan is sometimes said to be a fragmented society. Against that backdrop, housing complex division members and all Soka Gakkai members are trying to build networks of friendship by expanding the garden of dialogue. This combined effort for goodness is shining as a spiritual safety net fostering hope.

Nichiren Daishonin states, “The varied sufferings that all living beings undergo—all these are Nichiren’s own sufferings” (OTT, 138). Inheriting this spirit of great compassion, it’s crucial that we begin building from within our communities an era that lauds humanity.
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As Shin’ichi had discussed with Kaoru Tahara, he attended the memorial gongyo session at the Toda Auditorium on October 7. At that meeting, he offered three guidelines to secure the foundations of kosen-rufu.

“‘First, make your own human revolution the foundation of your activities.’ For polishing your life and making your character shine is the greatest actual proof of this Buddhism.

“‘Second, treasure your community, build strong and trusting relations with your neighbors, and make ongoing efforts to promote friendship.’ Expanding our network of friends and gaining the trust of many others means expanding the network of those who have a connection to Nichiren Buddhism.

“‘Third, pass on your faith in your family.’ The eternal flow of kosen-rufu and the enduring happiness and prosperity of your family into the future depend on transmitting your faith to your children, your grandchildren, your nephews and nieces, and so forth.

“I’d like to stress that if you follow these three guidelines you will be able to secure a solid foundation for kosen-rufu in Hokkaido.”

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A change in people’s underlying attitude is essential to revitalizing the organization and promoting kosen-rufu in our communities. When people’s hearts change and they arouse great courage, their voice, expression, behavior, and spirit also change, and they can transform every aspect of their lives and environment. This is the principle of the oneness of life and its environment.