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The New Human Revolution—Volume 10: Chapter 4***Installments: “Crown Champions” 44–48*****By Ho Goku****Crown Champions 44**

March 5 was a beautiful, clear spring day in Tokyo. Shin'ichi Yamamoto had been looking forward to this day with great anticipation. In the evening, a ceremony marking the establishment of the men's division, which had been announced at the February 27 Headquarters Leaders Meeting, would be held at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. During the day, whenever Shin'ichi saw one of the Headquarters staff who would be joining the new division, he would joyfully remark: “The time for men of the Soka Gakkai to stand up is here at last. The curtain will now rise on an age of full-fledged activities for kosen-rufu.”

Shin'ichi firmly believed that the members of the men's division were the pillars supporting the grand structure of kosen-rufu. During the time of Nichiren Daishonin, it was his middle-aged male disciples who played central roles among the laity.

For example, Shijo Kingo, one of the Daishonin's leading disciples in Kamakura, was about 40 years old when he accompanied the Daishonin during the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, prepared to give his own life to protect his mentor. It was also from his mid-40s that he tried to persuade his lord Ema to take faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism and bravely endured personal attacks and persecution that arose as a result, including the confiscation of some of his lands.

Despite this, Shijo Kingo is often thought of as a youthful follower of the Daishonin. This impression is partly due to the fact that he was 27 when he began practicing. More than anything, however, it can be attributed to his single-minded devotion to kosen-rufu, his sincerity, and his incredible passion.

The Japanese name for the men's division is *sonen-bu*—with *bu* meaning “division” and *sonen* literally meaning “men in the prime of life.” It is important therefore that the men's division members, while on the one hand being self-possessed

and level-headed, continue on the other to demonstrate courage, energy, and action as people who burn with a passionate commitment to kosen-rufu.

In addition to Shijo Kingo in Kamakura, the core followers of the Daishonin in the Shimosa region (part of modern-day Chiba and Ibaraki prefectures) were Toki Jonin, Ota Jomyo, and Soya Kyoshin, all men in their prime.

Toki Jonin gave the Daishonin refuge in his own home following the Matsubagayatsu Persecution.¹ Several years the Daishonin's senior, he joined in the struggle to spread the Mystic Law when he was in his mid-40s. Ota Jomyo, who was introduced to the Daishonin's teachings by Toki Jonin, is thought to have been around the same age as the Daishonin. Soya Kyoshin was two years younger than Jomyo. In other words, at the time of the Tatsunokuchi Persecution (1271), Toki Jonin was around 56 years old, Ota Jomyo was about 50, and Soya Kyoshin was about 48.

Because these men rose up to struggle valiantly and encouraged their fellow practitioners to do the same, they served as pillars of strength for many followers, who were inspired to persevere in faith amid great persecution.

Where there are such men, others feel reassured. When men stand up, it gives others courage. Their presence is significant, and their potential is tremendous.

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At 5:00 P.M., the ceremony marking the establishment of the men's division began in the hall on the third floor of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters. The brilliant rays of the setting sun poured into the room.

Shin'ichi led everyone in a solemn gongyo. The participants' faces shone with joy, excited to think that the time had come for them to demonstrate their real abilities. Shin'ichi prayed wholeheartedly that the members of the men's division, the great bulwark of the Soka Gakkai, would stand up resolutely.

After gongyo, General Director Hiroshi Izumida, the newly appointed leader of the men's division, addressed the gathering. He encouraged the men's division members to win in their workplaces and make outstanding contributions to their communities, gaining trust in society at large. Shin'ichi sat forward in his seat and applauded.

Men in their prime hold many key leadership positions in society. An important factor, therefore, in realizing a peaceful society based on Buddhist ideals lies in the men's division members playing active roles in every area of society and developing into great leaders.

¹ Matsubagayatsu Persecution: An attempt on the Daishonin's life by believers of the Pure Land school at his dwelling at Matsubagayatsu in Kamakura in 1260.

The age of the essential phase of kosen-rufu is the time when each individual manifests actual proof of their practice based on the principle that faith equals daily life.

The general director's remarks were followed by greetings from the vice leaders of the new division and then guidance from President Yamamoto.

Shin'ichi smiled broadly and said: "Congratulations on the establishment of the men's division. I am truly overjoyed that this day has come and I feel even more confident about the future of kosen-rufu."

This was Shin'ichi's honest sentiment. He next stated that for the sake of the continuous advancement of kosen-rufu, it was important to combine the strength of conservative caution with the youthful, vigorous spirit of reform, adding that it had been the exemplary efforts of maturity and youth together that had contributed to the Soka Gakkai's progress thus far. He further remarked that at this time of new beginning in the organization's movement, both the power of youth that fuels kosen-rufu's development and the experience and wisdom of the mature, well-rounded men's division members were crucial.

Shin'ichi then touched upon the role of the men's division within the Soka Gakkai as a whole: "It goes without saying that our organization advances through the cooperation of its various divisions. However, just as fathers are often the backbone of their families, the men's division members have an important mission to ensure the success of our activities. That is why men serve as central figures in each chapter and district.

"While one of the men's division's main functions is to foster men, I hope you will not view yourselves as just one of the Gakkai's divisions but that you will promote harmony among all divisions and shoulder responsibility for protecting the Soka Gakkai and the entire membership."

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Shouts of affirmation and applause filled the room.

Shin'ichi waited for the applause to subside and said: "If the men's division sets an outstanding example, then the women's, young men's, and young women's divisions will also develop splendidly. The sincere encouragement of the men's division will help to nurture truly capable people in every division.

"I would particularly like you to support the young men's division members as they strive to reveal their potential, providing them with opportunities to actively work on the front lines and taking full responsibility for their development. I would also like you to warmly support and protect the women's and young women's divisions. The

men's division is a model of faith for the other divisions. Everyone is watching to see how all of you, with the wide range of practical life experience you possess, will tackle your various challenges.

“If you persevere with strong faith no matter what happens, members of the other divisions will readily follow your admirable example. If, on the other hand, you are insincere and shrewdly maneuver circumstances to your own benefit, behave halfheartedly, or abandon your faith, it will cause others to lose sight of their goals and perhaps even to doubt their faith. Indeed, the role of the men's division is significant.”

Shin'ichi wanted to impress upon them the importance of carrying out faith throughout their lives. It is not uncommon to see men's passion wane as they get older, even though they may have been vigorously active in their youth and vowed to devote themselves to kosen-rufu. There are many reasons for this. One is that they become busier in their jobs as a result of increased responsibility. And sometimes illness or declining health is the cause. There are other instances in which they allow their faith to lapse, feeling that because they have given so much energy to their Soka Gakkai activities in the past, they deserve a break.

Of course, there are times in one's life when work must take top priority. Also, when one falls ill, it is important to rest and recuperate. But Buddhist practice is something we pursue throughout our life. No matter what circumstances we may encounter, it is vital that we never regress in faith. Even the slightest inclination to do so means that our faith is slipping, even though we may not be aware of it.

Nichiren Daishonin writes: “Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken in your resolve even a bit, devils will take advantage” (WND, 997). If we backslide in faith or fall victim to negligence or cowardice even a little, we create an opening by which the devilish functions can enter to try to destroy our faith and the foundation of our happiness.

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It was Shin'ichi's hope that all the members of the men's division would dedicate themselves to pursuing the path of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime, to achieving their human revolution, and to realizing glory and victory across the three existences. To abandon faith is to betray oneself. Pointing to the pitiful end that had come to those members who had left the Soka Gakkai and slandered and attacked President Toda and the organization, he spoke to the men's division of the importance of carrying out faith throughout their lives.

His voice rang with the firm determination not to allow even a single member to fall by the wayside: “No one can escape the strict workings of the Buddhist law of

cause and effect. That's why, no matter how you are denounced or criticized, it is vital that you remain steadfast in faith, always believing in the Gohonzon and sticking with the Soka Gakkai, certain of the great inconspicuous benefit you are accumulating.

“Quoting the Lotus Sutra, the Daishonin clearly states that those who uphold strong faith ‘will enjoy peace and security in their present existence and good circumstances in future existences’ (LS5, 99). There is no falsity in the words of Nichiren Daishonin.”

Shin'ichi's voice grew more forceful: “You, the members of the men's division, are entering a period of securing the foundation for the final chapter of your lives. Each of you possesses great ability. I hope you will apply all of your talents to the advancement of kosen-rufu.

“The Daishonin writes: ‘Since death is the same in either case, you should be willing to offer your life for the Lotus Sutra. Think of this offering as a drop of dew rejoining the ocean, or a speck of dust returning to the earth’ (WND, 1003). Because none of us can escape death, the Daishonin urges us to give our lives for the sake of the Lotus Sutra, the eternal Law of life. In other words, he tells us to use our lives working for kosen-rufu.

“That is the only way to become one with the Mystic Law, the great life of the universe, and to live an eternal life, just as a dew drop rejoins the ocean and a speck of dust returns to the earth. A lifetime passes quickly. And the period in that lifetime when we can be energetic and active is limited. Once people reach middle age, it all seems to go by in an instant.

“If you don't stand up now, when will you? If you don't exert yourselves now, when will you? How many decades do you intend to wait before you take your stand? There is no telling what condition you will be in then. You are in the prime of your life. It is a precious time in this present finite existence. I say this because I want you to have no regrets!”

Shin'ichi's voice, reverberating like the roar of a lion, deeply struck the hearts of the men's division members.

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The participants listened earnestly to Shin'ichi's guidance, wanting to absorb every word.

He continued: “President Makiguchi took faith when he was 57 years old. President Toda was 45 when he stood up alone to carry out kosen-rufu following his release from prison. They were both around the same age as many of you when they aroused great faith and embarked on the challenge of advancing kosen-rufu. This is a Soka Gakkai tradition.

“I am also a member of the men’s division. I hope that you will join me and rise up valiantly with the Gakkai spirit and become golden pillars supporting the citadel of Soka.”

The members’ faces shone with the determination of champions of kosen-rufu.

In closing, Shin’ichi said: “I am counting on you. If the men’s division develop remarkably and establish a solid framework for kosen-rufu, our organization will remain secure forever.”

Thunderous applause, infused with the members’ proud and joyous vow to carry out kosen-rufu, reverberated endlessly throughout the room.

Next, Kazumasa Morikawa, one of the new general administrators, read the editorial that Shin’ichi had just completed for the April edition of the *Daibyakurenge* study journal, titled “Valiant Champions of the Mystic Law.” In it, Shin’ichi set forth the attributes of such people.

The first was absolute conviction in the power of the Gohonzon. The second was the ability to face and challenge difficulties. The third was to be a leader well versed in all matters of society. The fourth was passion to foster younger members. The fifth was to be a broad-minded and humanistic leader. The sixth was a strong sense of duty and the ability to draw up a plan of action.

The editorial outlined all the goals that the men’s division should aim for.

Approximately six years had passed since Shin’ichi had become president of the Soka Gakkai. Now, preparations for a new phase of kosen-rufu were complete.

Shin’ichi bowed to the participants and made to leave the room. Then he stopped, raised his fist, and called out: “Everyone! Let’s struggle together! Let’s make a history of fresh achievements! If we are going to live this life, let us use it striving dynamically for the sake of the Law!”

The members raised their fists in response and shouted out in agreement. Tears shone in many an eye. Their hearts burned with fighting spirit. Filled with pride, these crown champions, great warriors of the Mystic Law, began their gallant march into the future.

Outside, the sky had grown dark, but the third floor of the Soka Gakkai Headquarters was ablaze with the light of joy.

(This concludes “Crown Champions” and also volume 10 of The New Human Revolution)