THE OSAKA CAMPAIGN

Learning from the Struggles of President Ikeda in his Youth
— Part 2 of 3

(This collection of reflections, recollections and testimonials was translated by 41 members of the Kansai World Group and presented to SGI President Daisaku Ikeda on November 18, 2003)

STUDY BASED ON ACTION LEADS TO VICTORY

Victory is certain when we follow what is taught

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda often gave guidance by quoting Gosho passages. His lectures were more than a study meeting, they were the practical teachings that led towards victory.

One leader recalled that Ikeda Sensei’s guidances in which he quoted from the Gosho led everyone to fight with a strong determination. “When we do what he teaches us, we will surely win.” This “feeling of security” turned into “courage”. Kansai members vigorously sought out ways to put Sensei’s guidance into action.

Setsuko Magari, then a District Women’s Division Chief
Sensei always gave us guidance with his entire being. He would say, “This is a battle between the Buddha and evil forces. I feel sorry for the members if we lose this battle.”

Sensei’s words touched our hearts. Sensei’s heart also communicated to our children. My four-year-old and one-year-old, who would usually get cranky during meetings, would sit quietly when Sensei spoke. Several members brought children and all of them would sit quietly next to their parents. I was amazed by the fact that President Ikeda’s determination even touched the children’s hearts.
At one meeting, Sensei taught us how important the faith of a wife is. He cited the following Gosho passage: “It is the power of the bow that determines the flight of the arrow, the might of the dragon that controls the movement of the clouds, and the strength of the wife that guides the actions of her husband” (WND-1, 656).

My father-in-law vehemently opposed my faith in the Gohonzon. In addition, my mother-in-law was bedridden and my husband did not support my practice.

Sensei said, “Do not lament the adversity you are in. With the great power that each woman possesses, she can transform her family and even her community.” Through his lecture I received immense courage and developed a strong conviction.

One day I attended a meeting without my children. Sensei noticed that my children were not with me. He then asked, “What happened to your children today?” He knew that I always sat in the corner with them. He noticed even this minor detail.
He asked me about my family. He then cited a Gosho passage, which states, “... the crow’s blackness and the heron’s whiteness are actually the deep stains of their past karma” (WND-1, 304). He then said, “Never hate or bear grudges against people who are opposed to this faith. They will surely understand you when you revolutionise your own state of life.”

Thereafter all my family members started practising Daishonin’s Buddhism, enabling us to become a happy and harmonious family, struggling together for the happiness of our friends.

_Growth is life, and retreat, death_

One local leader reminisced that President Ikeda was strict with leaders. Sensei’s guidance was based on the Gosho passage, “For example, if a commanding general is fainthearted, his soldiers will become cowards” (WND-1, 464). He went on to say, “Because you try hard to fulfil your responsibilities as a leader, you can manifest the power of faith and the power of practise. Likewise, the power of faith and practise will bring forth the power of the Buddha and the power of the Law. When the mentor is near, everyone will practise in earnest. Yet the true disciple is one who makes serious efforts when the mentor is away.”

Referring to this Gosho passage — “The situation is like the joints in a piece of bamboo: if one joint is ruptured, then all the joints will split” (WND-1, 512) — President Ikeda said: “If the central figure gives in, his organisation will end up losing. Soka Gakkai leaders should shoulder the responsibility for leading each and every member towards happiness. Leaders must take action on their own initiative towards that end.

“Everything falls into the ultimate law of life and death. Growth leads to life, while retreat leads to death. Therefore, the Daishonin says, ‘Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken in your resolve even a bit, devils will take advantage’” (WND-1, 997).
Kaoru Nakayama, then a Young Women’s Division Vice Corps Chief

In order to attend the morning Gosho lecture, I would have to take the 5:00 A.M. train. One day, I summoned up the courage to read the Gosho aloud in front of the members. The Gosho was from *The Record of Orally Transmitted Teachings*, which I had never read before. I was very nervous, but managed to read through to the end.

Sensei thanked me and then continued, “This is the most important time in your life to establish the foundation of your faith. I hope you will do your best. Please keep this in mind. During the war, Gakkai leaders abandoned their faith when imprisoned by the military authorities. They abandoned their faith because the Gosho was not deeply etched in their mind.”

Sensei gave very detailed guidance to the young women’s division members. Given the fact that the meeting was held early in the morning, I was careless about my appearance. It was then that Sensei pointed out to me, “We are creating a circle of friends who will stand by our side for our faith in Buddhism. However, if you are careless about your personal appearance, people will not be attracted to the Gakkai. Young women embracing the Mystic Law must be careful about their appearance.”

The first one to wake up and the last to sleep

The late Yoshiko Fukuo, who was a caretaker of the Kansai headquarters, wrote her remembrance as follows: “Sensei worked without any time to rest. He went to bed last and got up first. I had been told that in society, superiors generally took it easy. I was overwhelmed by Sensei, who ceaselessly devoted himself to others.”

President Ikeda gave lectures citing various Gosho passages.

No matter how humble a person may be, if his wisdom is the least bit greater than yours, you should ask him
about the meaning of the sutra (WND-1, 757).

**Ikeda Sensei:** In faith, you should not be arrogant. Without a seeking spirit to ‘learn’, you will not develop and grow. Even if you say you are great, people won’t believe you. This is self-complacency. The greatness of a person is determined by others.

Buddhism is like the body, and society like the shadow. When the body bends, so does the shadow (WND-1, 1039).

**Ikeda Sensei:** I don’t trust people who don’t work. One must not trust them. If you have worries about your job, you can’t fight with all your might.

...you had better cut short your sleep at night and curtail your leisure by day, and ponder this! You must not spend your lives in vain and regret it for ten thousand years to come (WND-1, 622).

**Ikeda Sensei:** Let’s carry out a fight without any regrets. Let’s do our best together. This is going to be the first historic struggle in Kansai. If you ‘cut short your sleep’ then you have engaged in the struggle earnestly.

One day of life is more valuable than all the treasures of the major world system (WND-1, 955).

**Ikeda Sensei:** The benefit we receive in our daily practise to the Gohonzon is tremendous. Why don’t we do in one day the work of a week or even ten days, dedicating our lives to the Gohonzon?

*Tomii, then a Women’s Division District Chief*

In those days, I ran a small restaurant near Tsuruhashi station. It was a 15-minute walk from the Kansai headquarters. I walked there early in the morning and sat right in front of the table where Sensei spoke.
I was having a hard time making ends meet. Sensei encouraged me with a Gosho passage: “…praying earnestly as though producing fire from damp wood, or obtaining water from parched ground” (WND-1, 444). This became one of my favourite passages from the Gosho.

Sensei would talk to us and say, “I hope you will become happy.” Although the room was packed with people, I felt that he was speaking directly to me.

We would communicate Sensei’s guidance to our fellow members before the day was over. Members looked forward to listening to what Sensei had said at these lectures.

**Destroy the impossible barrier with the sword of faith**

When one comes to the end of one’s good fortune, no strategy whatsoever avails. When one’s karmic rewards are exhausted, even one’s retainers no longer follow one (WND-1, 1000).

**Ikeda Sensei:** When you no longer have good fortune, nothing will go smoothly, no matter how hard you try or how excellent your strategies are. Good fortune means faith. As long as you doubt the Gohonzon, you won’t accumulate good fortune or benefit. Buddhism is the body and society is the shadow.

Those who embrace this Lotus Sutra should be prepared to meet with difficulties (GZ, 742).

**Ikeda Sensei:** We should practise faith while overcoming hardships. The Daishonin says, “Dedicate yourself to rebuke the powerful enemies just as Nichiren has done innumerable kalpas ago” (GZ, 1589). Never fear anything.

Break down the impossible barrier with the sword of faith. Sensei’s confident guidance taught the Kansai members what needed to be done.
Sadako Sakai, then a Young Women’s Division Vice Corps Chief

“If you exert a hundred million aeons of effort in a single moment of life, the three enlightened properties of the Buddha will appear within you at each moment” (GZ, 790). This is unforgettable guidance.

“Life means making decisions,” Sensei said. “No matter what happens, it is important to advance tirelessly, with a resolute mind. The attitude that I will make anything possible is the driving force to forge ahead.”

Gosho manifests guidelines for practise

In his early morning Gosho lectures, President Ikeda clearly pointed out that the guidelines for practise lie in the Gosho.

The characters of this sutra are all without exception living Buddhas of perfect enlightenment. But because we have the eyes of ordinary people, we see them as characters. ... To the eyes of ordinary people, they look like characters. Persons of the two vehicles perceive them as the void. Bodhisattvas look on them as innumerable doctrines. Buddhas recognise each character as a golden Shakyamuni (WND-1, 486).

Ikeda Sensei: In terms of the characters in the Lotus Sutra, ordinary people see them simply as letters. Persons of the two vehicles see them as the “void”. Bodhisattvas see them as “innumerable doctrines”. And the Buddha sees it as “a golden Shakyamuni”. Likewise we all feel different depending on our own life-condition. When you are in the world of Hell, everything around you feels like in the world of Hell. If you have a strong single moment of life filled with joy, you can control your environment even though you may be in the world of Hell or the realm of Anger. Without exception, you can change all your sufferings into happiness and ride out all difficulties.
People acting out of their own discretion will meet a dead end. Conceited people will be deadlocked in the end. You never know exactly what your mind is telling you. No one can avoid the influence of his environment.

Be determined to put the Gohonzon at the centre of your life and continue practising based on the Gosho. The Gohonzon should be “the master of your mind”.

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BE CHARGED WITH A MILLION VOLTS!

Latecomers never make it

One day, the ‘Early Morning Gosho Lecture’ by President Ikeda was held in the Gohonzon room on the third floor of the Kansai headquarters building. The members who attended this meeting said later: “What a tremendous spirit Sensei radiates when he sits in front of the Gohonzon! He raises our spirits so high towards the Gohonzon! This is dynamic gongyo! This is real daimoku!”

One of the leaders recalls: “Gongyo with Sensei in the morning was conducted with absolute seriousness. We used to run to the chanting room, never to be late. Then, we all came to realise the one truth in the battle for kosen-rufu. This one truth is, to seek Sensei single-mindedly, stay with him, and be with him wholeheartedly. When
you do this, you will experience tremendous energy, like high power voltage of, say, a million volts. This energy will prevail in every corner of your organisation. This truth has never left me since then.”

_Akiko Kurihara, then a Young Women’s Division Corps Chief_

During the early morning meeting, we would report the results of the campaign. Reports were given by each division, and I was responsible for the YWD results. One day I was late in reporting the results by about five minutes. Very few telephones were available in those days, so that was the reason I gave for being late.

Sensei pointed out: “Members fought hard in the battle for kosen-rufu and accomplished results, but you were not prepared to report the results they achieved. This is simply because your life as a leader is half-hearted. Reports have to be made swiftly, and they must be done on time. As it is said, ‘Latecomers never make it.’”

Here’s another story from a meeting at that time. One of the leaders was concerned about when the meeting would end. All of a sudden, looking at his watch, he said, “Sensei, time is up.” Sensei always allowed us to voice our opinions freely at such meetings so the leader probably didn’t hesitate to speak up on this occasion. “We are all here to discuss seriously the commitment of many years to come. How can you be in command of our victory when your mind is not synchronised with mine?” Sensei gave him this strict guidance. We all felt tense and realised the truth of what he was saying.

Without touching the right chord in Sensei’s heart, no amount of efforts will bring about satisfactory results. On the contrary, the situation may get worse and we could lose the battle.

This is what we learned from him: Report swiftly!

To be in gear with our mentor, we have to ask ourselves: How do I seek the mentor? How do I react to the mentor?
In those days President Ikeda trained each leader with careful consideration. The late Mrs Matsuko Shigoku, who struggled predominantly as one of the three women’s division district chiefs — called the “three crows”! — wrote that Sensei stressed the importance of liaison and reports. Sensei himself called us and sent us telegrams several times each day. He said, “The next time, you should communicate with me.”

One of the leaders, to whom President Ikeda gave a gift in encouragement, said: “About three days after I received the gift, I acknowledged it and said: ‘Thank you very much for what you gave me the other day.’ To this, Sensei responded: ‘You are late saying that.’ When I was presented with another special item, I thanked Sensei the very next day. However, he again said, ‘You are late.’ Through such everyday events, he taught us to imbibe his fighting spirit and his speed.”

_THINGS THAT SLIP THROUGH, LIKE A SIEVE_

A visiting central leader said, “I spoke before Sensei at a leaders meeting, and as soon as I returned to my seat Sensei said, ‘You are not in rhythm with me.’ He said this every time I spoke at meetings. Therefore, I studied Sensei’s guidance even harder, and the next time I spoke Sensei was nodding while listening to my speech.”

We must struggle and think how we can make our mentor’s heart our own. Then we will be in rhythm with our mentor.

The same leader was admonished by Sensei time and time again: “You are always forgetting things. You are like a sieve.”

“What shall I do?” the leader asked himself. “How can I overcome my weakness?” He sat in front of the Gohonzon in the middle of the night and chanted earnestly. He kept chanting seriously for many hours. Finally he realised that he really was a “sieve”. “I was arrogant, and puffed up,” he thought to himself with regret.

He made a deep resolve: “As a sieve, I will be what I am. A sieve is useful in its own way. I will become the ‘greatest sieve’ in Japan.”
Once he realised his real nature, a joyous feeling surged from within himself. From the following day, he worked to his heart’s content. After that, President Ikeda never again made this comment to him.

To receive Sensei’s guidance with your mind is one thing. To understand it with your whole being is quite another. You can work in perfect harmony only when you chant daimoku vigorously and make a resolve.

*Maki Nakao, then a Women’s Division District Chief*

We used to go to the Kansai Headquarters early in the morning. The door was always closed when morning gongyo started. If you were late even one minute, you were not allowed to enter the room. You had to do gongyo on the stairs in front of the room.

“When it comes to trains,” Sensei said, “if you are late by just one minute, you cannot get on the train.” He trained us to change our attitude towards faith.

Once he gave me guidance. My husband joined the Soka Gakkai before I did. Since I was busy raising our children, I was practising just following the lead of my husband.

Fully aware of my attitude towards faith, Sensei said to me: “Don’t hide in the shadow of your husband. Practise for your own sake.”

After the Gosho lecture, he would lead us in singing Gakkai songs. We all enjoyed being with Sensei.

*The core of unity is “faith”*

During briefing sessions, President Ikeda directed his admonishing remarks to the district and chapter chiefs who were absent: “At such important meetings, the representative leaders of every section should be present. It is their presence that helps the whole group realise its full potential. The whole system should be in gear. And it is your faith that gets you in gear with the motor.”

President Ikeda taught us about unity by sharing concrete examples. At a district leaders meeting, one YWD ward chief was
A ward chief at that time would be a district chief today. Sensei asked, “What happened to the YWD district chief?” The MD district chief answered, “I guess she couldn’t make it because of work.” Sensei told him, “Please give my best regards to her.”

The district chief conveyed Sensei’s words to her when he went back to the local organisation. She was impressed by Sensei’s sincerity. At the same time, she was ashamed because she had not contacted the MD district leader. She determined to be more in contact with him in the future.

Thus, President Ikeda taught us what is “unity in faith”.

Fusae Fukuzumi, then a Women’s Division District Chief

I took the earliest train to Kansai headquarters. I sat in the front row of the room to do gongyo with Sensei.

Sensei’s Gosho lectures were full of spirit and touched our hearts deeply. I learned from Sensei how grave our mission was and how great our fortune was: “Look at the world this year as a mirror. The reason that you have survived until now when so many have died was so that you would meet with this affair” (WND-1, 829).

Noticing that some members were missing at a meeting, Sensei asked other leaders why they were absent. When the leaders could not answer, he cited the words from the Gosho, “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” (WND-1, 618).

Thus he pointed towards our egoistic tendency and said that we truly did not care for others.

Like awa-okoshi or millet cake

Osaka is famous for its awa-okoshi or millet cake. One day, we enjoyed a wonderful conversation with President Ikeda while
eating *awa-okoshi* with him. Afterwards, Sensei said, “Now that you have eaten millet cakes, you can become united, can’t you?”

“United?” we exclaimed. We Kansai members could not understand what he meant.

President Ikeda explained, with humour, “*Awa-okoshi* is made of *awa* (millet) stiffened with caramelised sugar, isn’t it? This is, exactly, a form of unity.”

In this way, through daily, close communication with Sensei, the Kansai members learnt the correct attitude of practising faith.

One women’s division district chief said her district was suffering from stagnation. President Ikeda encouraged her, saying, “It’s lack of unity. You need to unite!”

Since then, all the district leaders made strong efforts to chant and fight. As a result, some 80 friends attended a discussion meeting and all of them became new members.

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THOSE WHO STRENGTHEN THE FRONTLINES OF THE ORGANISATION WILL TRIUMPH

*Capture the hearts of those on the frontlines*

In March, the “groups” within a district became the focus of our activities. Why is the “group” very important? President Ikeda gave this guidance to the central leaders: “Those who grasp the actual conditions of their groups will be victorious. Chapters which build their groups solidly will achieve victory. It is important that we revitalise the ‘groups’ in order to gain victory in our districts. The district is supported by its groups.”

President Ikeda taught us how to communicate with each and every member on the frontline and how to capture their hearts. He taught us that from there we could generate the “vitality to struggle” and the “rhythm of victory”.
Ayako Matsumoto, then a Women’s Division Group Chief

Sensei came all the way to Suita city. He said, “Please ask me any questions today,” but no one raised a hand. We did not know what to ask. “Let me talk to you instead then,” said Sensei, and confidently spoke to us about the stupendous power possessed by the Gohonzon.

After about two months, I received a postcard. It was from Sensei! “I hope you will dedicate yourself to achieve kosen-rufu no matter what and take leadership with vigorous action and strong faith.”

I leapt with joy! I was just a women’s division group leader at the time. I walked all over the city every day to show this card to each and every member.

Giichi Kitagawa, then a Men’s Division Group Chief

President Ikeda attended a general discussion meeting held in the Fuse Public Market in Fuse city [now Higashi-Osaka city]. The meeting was a dramatic one, in which 17 of the 18 friends who attended joined the Soka Gakkai. After the meeting, President Ikeda said, “I would like to visit some other meetings for members.”

I shouted without much consideration, “Please come to my group! It’s near here.” Accompanied by President Ikeda, members of my group walked to our meeting place. After a while, President Ikeda said, “Although you said it’s near, this is quite a distance.”

The distance was two bus stops away, and it took about 20 minutes to walk. Later on, a senior member said, “President Ikeda was tired because of his hard struggles.” I felt so sorry for him, but he walked together with us anyway.
Every member was poor. We could not even serve him tea or refreshments. Still, President Ikeda listened to each member attentively, asking in a frank manner, “How many children do you have?”

All of us were deeply impressed. One Youth Division member who was deeply moved by President Ikeda’s attitude said, “President Ikeda, shall I massage your shoulders?” We were like a family.

From then on, every member walked around doing shakubuku with joy, from morning till night. As a result, we shakubukued 73 households in just one month. We were so surprised with the results.

Flash the searchlight on the frontline

At a guidance meeting for unit leaders on April 1, President Ikeda announced a new policy for our activities. He put emphasis on the encouragement for groups rather than districts, for units rather than groups. “Unit” is the equivalent of the “block” unit of today. Our frontline was instantly multiplied. This became the “foundation for our future victory”.

A leader at that time said, quoting President Ikeda: “Shine a searchlight on your organisation. In order to nurture your members, let them realise their responsibilities. For example, take water in a bucket. If you stir the water in the bucket, the water will stop in a short while. But if you stir again before it stops, the water keeps moving. In other words, to keep the organisation moving, you have to visit it frequently. The same things can be said for leaders. You have to visit the frontlines often. Visit various areas in your organisation as if stirring water in the bucket.”

Sensei implemented this guidance as a role model. He often visited small meetings to encourage each member.

Terue Kitagawa, then a Women’s Division Group Chief

When we welcomed President Ikeda to our place, we had just left my husband’s parents’ house in Yao city and moved to Osaka.
Due to the distance from my in-laws, I was very worried about them. I talked with President Ikeda about this. He said, “Please don’t worry.”

After encouraging me, he went to Yao city to see my husband’s parents. He told them, “Please don’t worry about your son’s family. I will take care of them.”

I will never ever forget his warm consideration. That was the prime point of my practice.

Utmost encouragement even to those who are not Soka Gakkai members

President Ikeda attended a meeting for group leaders at the home of a district women’s division chief. The mother of the district women’s division chief had firmly refused to join the Soka Gakkai. However, she wondered what Ikeda Sensei looked like, so she came to glance over the meeting. She was dressed plainly, wearing an apron. She bumped into Sensei. The husband of the district women’s division chief introduced her to him, saying, “This is my mother-in-law.”

“Are you practising this faith?” President Ikeda asked her. She could not reply to his question. Holding her shoulders with his hands, he said, “Your daughter’s husband is a great person. Let’s practise together.” “Yes,” she answered.

President Ikeda’s behaviour touched the hearts of members on the frontline of the organisation.

Fumiko Inishi, then a Young Women’s Division Unit Chief

About five o’clock in the morning, Sensei visited our house, which served as an activity centre. “I am sorry that I woke you up so early,” he said. He then asked me if he could get some rest as he had just arrived in Kansai by an overnight train.

Our business was making tatami-mats, but it was very hard for us to make a living. We did not have any charcoal with which to heat our house. I tried to find something to warm
Sensei on that cold day, but couldn’t find anything. My mother finally found a piece of sakékasu, or saké lees in the cupboard, and with that we made a sweet drink of amazake (a sweet alcoholic drink made from fermented rice) for him. He sipped it, saying, “This tastes good, so good.”

Sensei never forgot this. When he saw us again some time after that, he thanked us, saying, “I’m sorry to have caused you so much trouble on that early morning.” He told the leaders around him, “Your responsibility is to support and encourage her with all your might. If she leaves the Gakkai, that is your fault.” His words were too generous for me.

Ayako Ohmi, then a Young Women’s Division Group Chief
Sensei encouraged me when I was a young women’s division group chief. One day when I went to the Kansai Headquarters, I saw he was waiting to ask me to draw his portrait. He then handed me a pencil and a piece of paper. I was surprised at his request. I had once attended an art school, but I was unaware that Sensei knew about it.

I do not remember what the picture looked like. What I remember is that I was very nervous, Sensei’s shy smile, and the words that he uttered: “Does it look like me?” I am still overwhelmed when I recall this incident.

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WE WILL DEFINITELY WIN, SENSEI! PLEASE COME TO KANSAI

Osaka stadium in the rain

It had been decided that the Joint General Meeting of Osaka and Sakai chapters would be held in the Osaka stadium on April 8, 1956 and that Toda Sensei would participate in that meeting. All the Kansai members wanted to do their best because Toda Sensei was coming.
President Ikeda was different. His attitude was, “Toda Sensei, we will be victorious in this campaign, please come to Kansai!” The members learned that this is the attitude of a genuine disciple towards his mentor.

*Akiko Kurihara, then a YWD Corps Chief*

In March that year, the Osaka chapter determined to shakubuku 5,000 households and welcome President Toda to the joint general meeting with the Sakai Chapter on April 8. President Ikeda told us how we should greet President Toda at the meeting. He said, “We should welcome President Toda with complete victory.”

Once the deadline of March had passed and we had reached our target, we devoted ourselves to doing more shakubuku until April 8, accomplishing another 4,000 shakubuku within a week. As a result, the total number of shakubuku in April that year was 9,000 households.

We learnt a very important lesson from President Ikeda. To us, welcoming our mentor meant achieving a victory.

*You can do it!*

Despite torrential rains, all the 20,000 participants who filled the ballpark for the joint meeting were undaunted. The “torch of faith” lit by President Ikeda could not be extinguished by the rain.

Members of Kansai developed a strong conviction after the general meeting. “We can do anything if we are determined.” Now they knew that there was nothing impossible for them as long as they followed President Ikeda’s guidance (*cf. The Human Revolution*). But no one knew at the time that the heavy rain would seriously affect President Ikeda’s health as he was suffering from exhaustion.

*Behave as though one’s mentor is always there*

“Day and night I reported every little thing about our battles to President Toda, while I made a tireless effort to carry out many
things for the victory,” writes President Ikeda (cf. *The Human Revolution*).

Mr Shiraki, then Osaka chapter chief, says, “President Ikeda reported each result of the struggle to President Toda over the phone. When we saw President Ikeda on the phone, he would sit up straight, as if President Toda was actually in front of him.”

“Everything begins and ends with the mentor-disciple relationship” (cf. *Thoughts on ‘The New Human Revolution’*). This is the foundation of the “Ever-victorious Kansai” spirit.

*Setsuko Umemoto, then a Standing Committee member of Osaka Chapter*

When President Toda was with us in the Osaka ballpark, Ikeda Sensei, who was busy leading us to prepare thoroughly for the general meeting, said to us: “When we disciples meet our mentor, we must do all we can to ensure complete victory. This is the way a disciple should follow.”

We learned a lot about the spirit of the “mentor and disciple relationship” from President Ikeda. When President Toda appeared or left the stage, Ikeda Sensei would always bow respectfully to his mentor. He would stand up straight and stiff even though he was backstage. When President Toda would suggest, “Daisaku, dance heroically,” President Ikeda would do so willingly.

President Toda would say of Ikeda Sensei: “Follow Daisaku. He is the person who will
accomplish what I haven’t done yet.” When we heard this, we were very impressed to know how deep the relationship between President Toda and Ikeda Sensei was.

Kaoru Nakayama, then a YWD Vice Corps Chief
At the Kansai headquarters, Sensei requested Ms Hisako Yaoi, who was a chapter standing committee member, to bring him something. She replied, “I’m sorry but what you asked for is not available now.”

When I brought some tea for Sensei, he said to me, “I was just relating an anecdote to Ms Yaoi. One winter day, Toda Sensei wanted to eat edamame, or young soybeans. In winter, edamame were scarce. But I did my best looking for them here and there, and finally found some. They looked bad, but Toda Sensei ate them with a smile, saying, ‘I am happy to see my disciple trying to respond to his mentor’s request.’ It is the disciple’s spirit that makes the mentor happy. I just wanted to tell her that,” said President Ikeda.

Nobuyuki Yanagihara, then a student
“I want to win. I want to inform Toda Sensei that we won.” Sensei said this many times.

One day, he was too tired to eat. A women’s division member was worried about Sensei and gave him chopped cabbage because she heard it was good for the stomach. He expressed his gratitude for her sincerity and suggested that we share the cabbage. I didn’t like cabbage and hesitated. He urged me to eat with him, saying, “The disciple should do what the mentor says. I usually did everything Toda Sensei told me to do, with pleasure. He would often tell me things that seemed impossible to accomplish, but I did whatever he said. This is the relationship of mentor and disciple.”

I learned that the relationship of mentor and disciple cannot be understood only through reason.
Yasuo Nakao, then a District Chief

The Hanazono Ryokan (Inn) was just behind my house. Toda Sensei often stayed there when he visited Kansai. My wife and I visited this inn, which was an activity centre, and so did many other members.

There was one person who stood out from the others. He dashed out of the inn. I later realised that it was Ikeda Sensei. Sensei was always urging President Toda, “Please take some rest.”

Ayako Ohmi, then a YWD Group Chief

In the early days, some Kansai members used the word “Sensei” for a leader from Tokyo. This leader supported Kansai activities. Later, we learnt that this leader had left the Gakkai, and betrayed it. I now remember that this leader had been eager for us to call him “Sensei”.

I had doubts whether it was correct to use this title, but since he was from Tokyo, I thought it was the right thing to do and started referring to him as “Sensei”.

Ikeda Sensei attended a meeting at Kansai Headquarters and told me very strongly, “Do not get out of line.” I was very surprised. He pointed out that there should not be the slightest gap between mentor and disciple.¹

Defeat the devil lurking behind success

Devils reside in “heaven”. Devils also lurked under the success of April 8. “People grew conceited. They were intoxicated with their own ability. Sometimes guidance of the leaders sent from Tokyo began to irritate them” (cf. The Human Revolution).

¹ Sensei is a Japanese title used to refer to or address teachers, professionals such as doctors and lawyers, politicians, and other authority figures. Sen means “before” and sei means “to be born”; the original meaning of sensei is one who is spiritually ahead of others. In the Soka Gakkai, however sensei denotes the mentor. Here Ikeda Sensei is clearly teaching the member the true meaning of the mentor-disciple relationship.
Friction arose between local leaders and the leaders from Tokyo. Immediately after the April 8 General Meeting, a leader went to the second floor of the Kansai Headquarters. As soon as the leader opened the door to deliver his report, he heard Sensei’s dignified voice, saying: “Go back to Tokyo.” He was talking to the leaders visiting from Tokyo. He strictly admonished them for their condescending manner towards the members in Kansai.

_Tadashi Murata, then a Vice Chapter Chief_

It was after the General Meeting of April 8, which ended in great success. There was a subtle gap between leaders sent from Tokyo and the central leaders of Osaka. The leaders from Tokyo were certainly doing a good job. They had gained our trust, but we were not getting along very well.

“Are the leaders of Osaka your enemies, or are they your allies?” Sensei asked the central leaders visiting from Tokyo.

It was _we_ who were being impudent. Sensei’s guidance to Tokyo leaders made us realise our behaviour. Thus, Sensei defeated the devils disturbing our unity. We had nothing to fear after that.

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_I WOULD FEEL TERRIBLY SORRY FOR THE MEMBERS OF KANSAI IF WE ARE DEFEATED_

_Don’t keep silent_

The late chapter women’s division chief, Aya Shiraki, would often quote Sensei on Kansai: “I would feel sorry if the Kansai members were defeated. My strongest wish is to see the members of Kansai travelling around the world with pride and hope.” He also said, “If Kansai is defeated, President Toda’s vision will fall apart. This is a struggle we have to win, no matter what.” Upon hearing these words from Sensei, she was awestruck.
Akiko Kurihara, then a Young Women’s Division Corps Chief

Without fail, Sensei would ask if there was anything to report to him. I was silent in the beginning. “You should state your opinion,” Sensei said. “Don’t be silent. You must have something to say when you are striving.”

I learned from this incident that I should report how my fellow members were struggling. I told him about a young women’s division member. Then he asked, “How is her mother doing?” or “What about her father?” In this way, he asked me about her in detail.

“I don’t know,” I answered. Sensei said, “Your report is incomplete. If you are truly praying for the happiness of this member, you should know more about her.” I realised how careless and irresponsible I had been towards my fellow members.

“Your husband just left for home…” President Ikeda called up the wife of a man who was in charge of one of the areas of Osaka Prefecture. The people in charge of the areas recently formed, such as this man, would rarely come home. They would stay at the Kansai headquarters all night, struggling for kosen-rufu.

At seven in the morning, a phone rang, and it was President Ikeda. “This is Ikeda speaking.
Thank you for your day-to-day struggles. Your husband just left for home. Please take care of him.” The man’s wife was very impressed. President Ikeda protects and cares for every member as much as he can. His behaviour enhanced her firm resolve to try harder.

_Tadashi Murata, then a Vice Chapter Chief_

At a leaders briefing in the morning, Sensei asked for details on every situation. To the leaders sent from Tokyo, he asked, “How is your work?”

He was also worried about everyone’s health and said, “Who came back later than I yesterday?” To those who raised their hands, he said, “Please go home early today to get some rest.” He cared for the members more than anyone else.

_To fellow members who had a lot of debts_

President Ikeda visited a member who had incurred a lot of debts when his family business went into bankruptcy. After listening to how the member’s business was forced into such dire circumstances, Sensei said to him, “This will become a precious memory for you. Even though it’s difficult, don’t try to avoid the creditors. Try to do your best with utmost sincerity. Your problem will surely be resolved.”

To this man’s wife, Sensei said, “Please maintain a housekeeping log and make a life plan without any wastage.” “Just because you have faith, do not expect that you will only experience joy. Both suffering and joy will become your own good fortune. Even though you are suffering now, everything will turn out to be good for the Law, the people and yourself.”

Since that moment, the couple did their best to pay off their debts to the creditors. Their sincerity in doing so was recognised, and as a result, creditors waived their claim, which was quite unexpected.
Fumiko Watanabe, then a Chapter Standing Committee member

Whenever I heard that Sensei was coming to Osaka, I would always greet him at Osaka station. However, I stopped participating in activities because I got tired of harsh words from a leader’s family member. Although the leader worried about me and visited me, I could not go to activities.

A leader called me unexpectedly and said, “Toda Sensei will arrive at Osaka station tomorrow afternoon. Could you go and receive him?”

The next day, I went reluctantly to Osaka station. I was standing away from a group of people who had come to meet Sensei. When his train arrived and Toda Sensei stepped onto the platform, a crowd of people gathered around him. During this time, a person passed through the crowd and walked towards me. It was Ikeda Sensei.

I said, “I apologise for making you worry.” I was ashamed and regretful. Sensei kindly said, “I understand your situation now that I have met you.” Hearing him say this took a load off my mind.

I later found out that Sensei had requested a leader to “ask [me] to come to the station to meet him”.

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A CAPABLE PERSON IS AN IMPORTANT TREASURE OF GAKKAI

Open to any type of questions

How was “the heart of eternal victory” engraved into the heart of Kansai members? This spirit was developed through a close relationship between President Ikeda and the members.

The warmhearted bonds between President Ikeda and the Kansai members are tied by human-to-human interchange, an atmosphere where people could talk freely about anything they wanted to. President Ikeda strengthened the faith of many members through frank conversations with them.
Akinori Mineyama, then a Young Men's Division Group Chief
Ikeda Sensei used to go to a public bath\(^2\) with the youth members. Even at the public bathhouse he was thinking of each member. At one time a member was wearing a pair of socks with a hole in it. On the following day, I saw Sensei give him new socks with a *shikishi* (square piece of fancy paper) on which was penned, “Become a vigorous youth of the Orient ... A cosmopolitan youth.”

One after another, the young men’s division members washed Sensei’s back. Sensei then said, “Thanks, it feels good, really good.” He used opportunities such as these to listen to what the members had to say.

One senior member asked, “Do you know where the nearest drugstore is?” The senior member needed to find medicine for Sensei’s back which had turned red because each of the members had scrubbed it so vigorously.

*Children sleeping in the closet*

President Ikeda attended the local meetings with great vigour. He once attended a meeting at a home used as an activity centre. He was

\(^2\) The Japanese bath is integral to the Japanese way of living. Public bathing in Japanese society has long-standing roots in the culture. In Japan, every neighbourhood has its public bath. In Tokyo, there are more than a thousand. The concept of being in a bath with strangers shows that each one is as vulnerable as the other; they have no armour, or sword, in the bath. Traditionally, only a son, wife or daughter has permission to wash the father’s back. On the male side of a bath house, a man letting another man scrub his back is a sign of respect. On the women’s side, a woman letting another woman scrub her back is a sign of friendship and trust, and can even mean that the two women are either sisters or best friends. Bathing together like this is commonplace for the Japanese. The traditional bathing practice in Japan is to first bathe out of the tub with cold water and then soak in a hot tub after rinsing off. In Tokyo, the water in the bath house soaking tubs is kept really hot, almost to the point of scalding.
told that the children of the house were sleeping in the closet because the family didn’t have enough space to accommodate members.

“You will eventually live in a house with lots of space, enough to have a study room too,” President Ikeda said. In addition to this guidance, he penned a poem to encourage the children.

With hope in your mind
And the sun in your heart,
Illuminated by the light of the Mystic Law,
Grow vigorously

Two years later, the family’s wish became true and they moved to a larger house.

Akiko Kurihara, then a Young Women’s Division Corps Chief
One day, the Kansai headquarters received a telephone call. It was for a leader of the young men’s division. The leader was not there and so Sensei answered the call. The caller thought that Sensei was the leader and kept on talking. After listening to him, Sensei repeated what the man had said, which was humourous and funny.

After a while, the caller started asking, “How is Ikeda Sensei?” And Sensei answered, “I think he’s all right.” It was hilarious! Till the very end of the conversation, the caller didn’t even notice who he was talking to. What a sense of humour Sensei has! When I was with Sensei, I really enjoyed myself. I realised that I could actually enjoy the struggle for kosen-rufu. Until then I had believed that this battle was only strenuous.

“I dislike people who don’t study...”

On one occasion a junior high school girl attended a women’s division district leaders meeting with her mother.

When President Ikeda came to the meeting, he said, “Kansai has a very cute district leader, doesn’t it?” The junior high school
girl raised her hand and said, “I accompanied my mother today. I’d like to ask your advice on something.”

Her mother seemed to be very surprised. “My mother is working hard both at work and in Gakkai activities. For this reason, I am helping her with the housework. After school, I go to the market with the money she gives me. My mother works too hard, so I’ll quit school and work with her. In addition, I want to do my best for Gakkai activities,” said the young girl.

President Ikeda listened intently to the girl and then responded: “I don’t like people who don’t go to school. I dislike a person who doesn’t study. Now is the time when you should help your mother and go to school as much as you can. You should study while helping your mother.”

Touched by his all-enveloping warm heart, the girl determined to overcome whatever hardships she might face.

*Setsuko Umemoto, then a Chapter Standing Committee member*

A young woman was at a complete loss when appointed as a women’s division district leader and sought Sensei’s guidance.

Sensei said, “I would like you to respect your senior members who have been doing activities with you. I hope you will sincerely solicit their support because they are very important for the organisation.”

Then, taking out his folded fan, Sensei pointed at the joint of the fan and said, “When you unfold this fan, you need to hold the joint to do so. The function of our organisation is the same. The axis of our organisation is our senior members. If they can comfortably do their activities, we can be victorious.” The young women’s division member regained her confidence through this guidance.

*The broken windowpane and a newspaper*

A windowpane at the Kansai headquarters was broken. We could not afford to repair it.
Standing outside the Kansai headquarters building, President Ikeda shouted, “Please bring some newspapers to me.” A senior leader who was inside the building responded, “Sensei, why don’t you read the newspaper inside the building?”

President Ikeda replied, “Come on, just give me some newspapers.” He folded the paper and threw it into the hole of the broken windowpane and it fell perfectly into the building.

“Sensei, you threw it perfectly!” “If you think that’s easy to do, try it.” The senior leader tried to throw the folded papers, but they didn’t fall into the hole.

In the beginning, they thought President Ikeda was just playing with the papers. However, he was actually teaching them the essence of faith through this casual behaviour.

“When I was a boy, I delivered newspapers every day, rain or shine. I had a hard time putting the newspapers into the mailboxes smoothly. Since I struggled in the past, I can throw papers into the hole of a broken windowpane even now. Because you didn’t struggle before, you can’t do it.”

President Ikeda was raising genuine, capable people who were willing to make efforts.
Nobuyuki Yanagihara, then a student

Right after I entered university, I was called to the Kansai headquarters. I had been practising for four months, and did not understand anything about the practice then.

President Ikeda said to me, “You look sceptical.” “Yes, there is something I cannot understand,” I replied, and asked him some questions. Now, as I look back on it, Sensei’s precious time was spent on an impudent youth, despite his busy schedule.

Then Sensei said, “I would like you to help me a little.”

I said falteringly, “Well, I’m not able to help you…” But before I finished my sentence, another thought overtook me and I said, “Let me take back what I said. Please let me do the work.” While I said this, Sensei gazed at me. He was seriously trying to foster young people like myself who were still quite immature.

One day, Sensei asked me to call for a taxi. I ran out of the building to do so. When I returned, a women’s division member related to me that when she told Sensei there was no need for me to be in such a hurry, Sensei replied that the young people’s attitude of “always giving it all they’ve got” is truly respectable.

Toshiyasu Fuwa, then a student

I was one of the members told to come to the Kansai headquarters with Mr Yanagihara. On the third floor of the building, Sensei said, “No matter what happens, never give up your faith. Consult me before you do so.” “Yes,” I responded. The determination I made at that time has helped me to hold on to my faith until today.

Sensei came in when we were chanting daimoku at the Kansai headquarters, and told us, “Don’t chant daimoku in such a strained voice. Chant daimoku in a refreshing and rhythmical way, as if you were striding across the sky.” He trained us on every occasion.
Win by chanting

A woman visited the Kansai headquarters seeking Sensei’s guidance. She waited for his return until midnight. President Ikeda came back, exhausted, after day-long activities with members. The woman told her story in tears. She talked about her jobless husband, delinquent child and financial difficulties. President Ikeda encouraged her despite his fatigue: “Don’t cry so much. Tears harm your pretty face. The Gohonzon will never betray you. You will be happy without fail, no matter how much pain you are in right now. Your prayers will be definitely answered. Chant ten thousand daimoku every day. Let’s pray together. Develop your courage and practise this Buddhism which involves faith, practise and study. Don’t worry. I’ll pray for you, too.”

In another instance, President Ikeda told us the following story about the time he visited a district women’s leader who was in a predicament. “Determine to chant one million daimoku if you have a wish. It will be fulfilled without fail as long as you keep chanting. It’s important to chant daimoku to fulfil your wish.”

On another occasion, President Ikeda told a youth member while they were travelling in a taxi: “In Tokyo, I rarely take taxis because I walk. If I walk, I can chant daimoku on the way.”

President Ikeda taught members to win by chanting daimoku.

Akinori Mineyama, then a Young Men’s Division Group Chief

Sensei asked the young men’s division members at a meeting, “What do you think we should do to win?”

In response, we gave our ideas, expecting Sensei would work out a subtle strategy for us to follow. However, Sensei said, “Do everything that you said. And chant daimoku.”

Sensei respected the youth and their independence.
Comrades, enjoy, leap and shout!

In April 1956, exactly 9,002 households received the Gohonzon. This was an unprecedented expansion. This is an entry in A Youthful Diary:

We will decisively challenge and surpass this target in May. The dream of 10,000 households is possible to attain. Like a rising tide, like raging waves, we save suffering people. Enjoy! Leap! Shout! Dance! Sing! Robust youth of the Mystic Law! Comrades in spirit! Now we were entering the month of May, a monumental landmark in the history of the Soka Gakkai. The struggle with evil forces and serious obstacles lay ahead of us.

How can you create an unprecedented history when you’re not committed or ready to stake your life? Stand up alone in response to the mentor’s “cry from the depths of his being!”

[To be continued]

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