THE OSAKA CAMPAIGN

Learning from the Struggles of President Ikeda in his Youth — Part 1 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)

BREAKING BARRIERS!

“I will do it”

Just how does one make one’s mentor’s vision a reality? The answer lies in the actions of the disciple. How does a disciple struggle to realise his or her mentor’s great desire to achieve kosen-rufu? What were the thoughts of President Ikeda during his youth?

The following entry dated March 29, 1956 (Thursday) appears in A Youthful Diary:

1952: Built a great foundation for Kamata Chapter
1953: Tremendous growth in Bunkyo Chapter
1954: Established the foundation and achieved great progress for the Youth Division
1956: Will finally lead in earnest in this spring’s battle in Osaka

“Will finally”: The determination of President Ikeda (then a youth of 28 years) to devote his entire being to the accomplishment
of his mentor’s great desire shines out clearly. The following is also written. “The next three years ... will determine the outcome of my life.”

Two years after President Ikeda made this entry, his mentor passed away. It was without a doubt the true moment of struggle. Only one genuine disciple was aware that the time for kosen-rufu had come, and “exerting one hundred million eons of effort in a single life-moment”, he delved into the Osaka Campaign.

“I am staking my whole life...”

What made the tremendous victory possible in the Osaka Campaign? How was the ever-victorious history established?

The second president Josei Toda told one of the leaders, “Just as Daisaku said, ‘I will take full responsibility for the Osaka Campaign,’ I am going to let him do it.” This was around April 1955.

In Thoughts on ‘The New Human Revolution’, President Ikeda writes: “When Toda Sensei became the second president of the Soka Gakkai, 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.’ My mentor replied on the spot: ‘All right. If that’s what you think, Daisaku, go to Osaka and build a chapter there.’”

President Ikeda volunteered to take the lead in the Osaka Campaign, which was deemed impossible to win. His dedicated willingness paved the way for victory.

The entry dated October 31, 1955 in A Youthful Diary states: “This battle (in Osaka) will determine my destiny. My only recourse is to believe in the Buddhist gods’ protection. No, rather than simply parroting Buddhist terms, I must first dedicate my entire spirit, my essence. Only then can I expect protection from the Buddhist gods.”

Was there anyone who was even aware of President Ikeda’s agony in the depths of his heart?
When President Ikeda said to one of the leaders from Tokyo, “I’ll take you to Osaka,” the leader thought that President Ikeda would take him there for sightseeing. Only after struggling under the leadership of President Ikeda for some time did he realise Sensei’s firm resolve to make the impossible possible.

Giichiro Shiraki, then Chapter Chief of Osaka
I once expressed my determination in front of Ikeda Sensei: “It seems to be very difficult for us to win in this campaign. However, even if we lose this time, I will keep fighting until I win.” Although this was said in a spirit of earnest determination, Sensei refuted it, saying, “I’m staking my whole life on this campaign. We cannot afford to lose, no matter what happens.” With deep regret, I realised my shallowness. I then felt that I could sense Sensei’s unwavering determination.

Preparation accounts for 90 per cent of the task to accomplish the goal

From September 1954, President Ikeda visited Osaka once a month to give lectures to candidate members of the study department in Kansai. The novel *The Human Revolution* states, “He put his extraordinary passion into every single word of his lectures.”

The leaders who had fought with President Ikeda said, “After arriving in Osaka, Sensei told us that preparation accounts for 90 per cent of the battle. If you want to achieve your goal, you should make thorough preparation behind the scenes.” President Ikeda was steadily making preparations alone without anyone knowing. He and the members in Kansai were tied in a deep bond since that time.

Tadashi Murata, then Vice Chapter Chief of Osaka
In September 1954, the first Gosho lecture by President Ikeda was held in Osaka. We studied the Gosho without a break from morning to afternoon. There is one Gosho passage that I cannot
forget. “I, Nichiren, do not cry, but my tears flow ceaselessly. I shed my tears not for worldly affairs but solely for the sake of the Lotus Sutra” (WND-1, 386).

Sensei encouraged us, saying, “For the sake of the Gohonzon, for the sake of kosen-rufu, we should struggle with an earnest and sincere spirit as if we were shedding tears. Live your life to the fullest as a Soka Gakkai member.” Inspired by his fervour, I felt as if my entire body was trembling.

In the midst of the Osaka Campaign in 1956, there was a severe shortage of leaders who could take care of new members because of the rapid expansion of membership. Amidst this situation, the members who had attended Sensei’s Gosho lectures during 1954 and 1955 developed into group or district leaders to support the organisation as core members.

Kotoe Ousaka, then a Women’s Division Group Chief
In September 1954, I went to Osaka from Kyoto to attend a Gosho lecture as a candidate member of the study department, carrying the Gosho that I had managed to buy. Although I was in the neighbourhood of the venue, I just couldn’t locate the meeting place. While looking round on the street, I saw a smart-looking young man walking in my direction. I thought, “Wow! Osaka is such a big city and so different from what I imagined. Even men walking on the street look different. This young man looks so sophisticated.” The man caught my eye and passed by me.

At the meeting place, the Osaka Chapter Chief, Mr Giichiro Shiraki, introduced the lecturer to us. “Oh, he is the man I saw a little while ago,” I remembered. That very person was, to my surprise, President Ikeda.

He delivered a lecture filled with great passion and firm conviction. I had never known that there was such a wonderful person in the Soka Gakkai. I was enveloped with a sense of ineffable delight when he said, “From head to toe, your entire body is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.”
Up until that moment, with the collapse of my husband’s company, the ensuing poverty and other hardships, I had lamented why I alone was so unhappy. But suddenly the sun of hope rose brilliantly in my heart.

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“FAITH IN THE GOHONZON”: THE STARTING POINT

“Produce fire from damp wood …”

It was late in the afternoon on January 4 when President Ikeda arrived in Osaka by the express train Swallow and visited the Kansai headquarters for the first time.

“This Gohonzon is truly great. It has been inscribed ‘for the prosperity of the Great Law and fulfilment of all prayers’. This means that the Great Law will spread in Kansai and all prayers will be fulfilled, signifying that we have already won this campaign” — this is what Sensei declared soon after arriving in Osaka. The struggle for victory starts from “faith in the Gohonzon”.

The first Gosho passages Sensei quoted were, “… praying as earnestly as though to produce fire from damp wood, or to obtain water from parched ground” (WND-1, 444) and “Employ the strategy of the Lotus Sutra before any other” (WND-1, 1001).

He taught us to have the great conviction that no prayers would be unanswered if you chanted to the Gohonzon. “You
must start from sincere and strong prayers to the Gohonzon. When everyone’s prayers become one and reach the Gohonzon, the path to make the impossible possible will surely unfold.”

One of the leaders at the time said, “None of us was aware that behind the scenes Sensei was praying as though he was ‘exerting a hundred million aeons of effort’. It was only after the campaign that he disclosed to us he had been ‘chanting so that everyone, including people in the world of hell and even those in the world of hunger, would all participate in this campaign’.”

Another pioneer leader says, “One day, Sensei told us why he prayed so earnestly. The first reason was that ‘If we were defeated, President Toda’s plan for the future would collapse.’ Second, ‘Losing in this campaign means losing in the first campaign.’ That’s why I chanted, ‘We must make the impossible possible.’”

Tadashi Murata, then Vice Chapter Chief
I believe it was the beginning of 1956 when the senior leaders of Osaka gathered and did gongyo with Sensei on the third floor of the Kansai headquarters. The chanting started and continued for an hour. My legs hurt very badly and I kept wondering when it would end so I kept looking at Sensei’s back while I was chanting. I think we must have chanted eventually for about two hours.

At that time, even the senior leaders had been practising for only three or four years. I myself joined in 1953 and was in the third year of my practise. Of course, I knew that chanting was important and I was doing gongyo regularly but could only chant for 20 minutes at most. Sensei sensed such an atmosphere in Osaka and taught us the importance of daimoku through his action at the beginning of the campaign.

During the same period there was a report from a local member who said, “Sensei was chanting in the car.”

In those days it was rare for ordinary people to ride in a car. So the member thought that Sensei was chanting because he was not used to riding in cars and afraid of traffic accidents. The member said to Sensei, “It’s okay, Sensei, I won’t cause any
accidents.” But Sensei answered, “I am infiltrating daimoku into the earth of Osaka.” Soon afterwards a storm of chanting was raised in Osaka.

Sensei’s words still echo in my heart, “Daimoku is the fount of everything.”

Hitoshi Tsuji, then a Young Men’s Division Group Chief
At the Kansai headquarters at midnight, after attending the YMD planning meeting, I opened the door of the chanting room in order to chant three daimoku before going home. I was completely awe-stricken with what I saw — Sensei was chanting earnestly by himself.

I straightened myself, impressed by Sensei’s solemn attitude of chanting alone at midnight while everyone else must have already been asleep. He was exerting a hundred million aeons of effort in a single moment of life.

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ADVANCE CHEERFULLY, DANCING WITH JOY

A cheerful atmosphere attracts people

The following day, January 5, Sensei’s second day in Osaka, a district chiefs meeting was held in the evening. At first, President Ikeda disclosed in detail how poor their strength in Kansai was and how far they were from victory. He did so because he knew that only “the truth could work as a springboard to help them make firm resolutions” (The Human Revolution).

Everyone was expecting strict guidance regarding the election campaign; nevertheless, President Ikeda reacted in a
completely opposite way. He suggested dancing to ‘Kurodabushi’, saying, “Why don’t we dance?” He said, “People will be attracted to a place where there are ‘songs, tears and laughter’.”

Kiichiro Aoki, then a Vice District Chief

On January 5, I attended a district chiefs meeting at the Kansai headquarters. I was astonished to hear President Ikeda’s voice for the first time. It was refreshing and yet full of vitality. He was slim but his voice reverberated powerfully in my heart.

He told us that it would be a hard-fought campaign. Although everyone was determined to do their best in the campaign — which seemed impossible to win — they couldn’t help but feel anxious after realising the gravity of the situation. I wondered if President Ikeda could have read the atmosphere. He said, “Let’s sing ‘Kurodabushi’ since we still have time.” And then he danced composedly. His free movements were those of a young warrior’s pre-battle dance.

Then he called out, “Since this is our first campaign in Kansai, is there anybody who wants to dance?” In response, one person came up to the front and danced.

Bursts of laughter broke out around the room over the ridiculous motions of the dancer whose movements were not in rhythm with the song at all. Eventually, I also went up to the front and danced.

Everyone laughed outright. My awkward dance must have seemed hilarious to everyone, although I was doing it seriously. Overwhelmed by President Ikeda’s confidence-filled guidance, I must have become so excited that I danced without thinking.

He finished up with yet another wonderful dance, and told us, “We’ll continue to fight during this campaign while dancing. Let’s advance cheerfully.” The tense atmosphere inside the room was dispersed, turning into a lighter and brighter one. My mind became as clear as a cloudless sky and I was filled with a strong sense of determination to fight.
“Powerful and strong prayers” and “the most effective action”

“The primary essence of victory is ‘powerful and strong prayers’.
And the second-most important essence is ‘the best strategy and
the most effective action’. Achieving victory is not possible only
with the primary essence, or with the secondary essence alone.
Only when both are perfectly harmonised does the impossible
become possible. What brings about this harmony is ‘faith’.”

President Ikeda asked at the district leaders meeting on
January 5: “How can we harmonise ‘powerful and strong
prayers’ with ‘the best strategy and the most effective action’?
Only through ‘faith’. In other words, ‘unity’.”

However, nobody understood the real meaning of unity.
How could they unite? A difficult lecture would not make them
understand. President Ikeda sang a song and danced in front of
them. He let them learn of their own accord what “unity” was in
a cheerful atmosphere filled with bursts of laughter.

One of the leaders commented, “We felt that the ‘struggle
for the campaign started from dancing’. I would practise dancing
before going to bed. Looking back at it now, I feel embarrassed
about how ignorant I was. Later, however, I realised everything.
President Ikeda taught us what unity was all about through
dancing. We would not have understood it otherwise.”

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WHAT WE SHOULD RELY ON ARE THE GOHONZON AND THE GOSHO

Start the battle based on study …

“There are only two things which I should rely on, the Gohonzon
and the Gosho” (The Human Revolution).

President Ikeda started the struggle with study as the basis.
Both on his first day of battle in Osaka, January 4, and during his
second stay there (from January 14 to 16) he held energetic
question-and-answer sessions for prospective study department members. On his third visit (January 29), he even acted as an interviewer for the study examination.

Fumiko Inishi, then a Young Women’s Division Unit Chief
As I lived near Osaka Station, I would often see off President Ikeda with some of the youth division members. I sometimes saved a seat for him in the third-class car, because it was usual for him to encourage members on the platform till the last minute. Even after the train started to leave, we still asked for his guidance, shouting, “Sensei! Sensei!”

I had another chance to meet him at an oral examination held for candidates of the study department. He was the interviewer. He said, “You always saw me off at Osaka Station, didn’t you? Thank you very much.” He remembered me, though I had never received guidance from him personally. I was so moved.

I took the oral examination with only poor knowledge of study. I was asked about the Daishonin’s leaving of Mt Minobu. I was so overwhelmed that I answered something like, “Priest Nikko was so sober, and serious as a gravestone, wearing the formal attire of a samurai.”

Sensei laughed and laughed merrily, saying, “Who ever told you that?” The atmosphere relaxed at once.

One of the senior members from the pioneer days told us laughingly of an anecdote referring to how inexperienced the members in Kansai were: “We were told that if we do kingyo (gongyo) every morning and evening and do a seppuku (shakubuku) a month, we can get koutoku (kudoku).” This was during those days when the members lacked basic knowledge of Buddhist terms.

Setsuko Sugihara, then a Young Women’s Division Unit Chief
It was when I took the Joshi (assistant teacher) oral examination. I saw many leaders around me and that made me nervous. I did
not feel I belonged there because I was inexperienced and so young. When I entered the interview room, I saw Sensei.

“You are Setsuko Hara (a very famous actress at that time), aren’t you?” he asked me with a smile. I said, “No. I’m Setsuko Sugihara.” I became totally relaxed hearing his words.

Sensei listened to me earnestly while I talked about my family situation and other things. I couldn’t believe it was the first time I had seen him because I felt enveloped by his warmth and consideration. I also felt as if invited to a beautiful palace.

I clearly remember what Sensei communicated to me with his gallant eyes. “No matter what may happen to you, never let go of the Gohonzon. Be sure to become happy.” From the time of that interview, I began to study this Buddhism earnestly.

Toshiyasu Fuwa, then a college student

When I was a prospective member of the study department, I had a chance to sit in on a Gosho lecture given by President Ikeda.

We studied ‘The Threefold Secret Teaching’ and ‘The Entity of the Mystic Law’. They were both quite difficult to grasp. He said to us, “They are difficult, but if you read them ten times, you’ll be able to understand in the end.” I did my best to follow his guidance on this matter. I studied and studied, even on the train.

As a result, I realised, “What a wonderful faith I’ve been practising!” I was deeply moved. Since then, I’ve always made great efforts to study the Gosho.

The Gosho is “the sword of a samurai”

President Ikeda emphasised that battles based on the Gosho are “the best strategies and activities”. He also said, “In any battle, take action with strong faith. There are no better strategies than the Lotus Sutra. Never think of applying strategies other than that.” Many pioneer members say, “We were all told that the Gosho is like one’s sword. When he found a member without a
Gosho, he would ask very severely, ‘What happened to your Gosho?’”

*Masuko Mineyama, then a Young Women’s Division Vice Corps Chief*

About a year after I started practising, I met Ikeda Sensei for the first time. He kindly asked me about my family and job situation. At that time, I was working for a library in Ikeda City. I told him there were about 40,000 books there. Then he asked me, “Do you have the Gosho? You are surrounded by 40,000 books but you don’t have a Gosho of your own, do you? When Mr Makiguchi and Mr Toda were jailed, all the other members except for them abandoned the faith because of lack of study.” He taught me the importance of study.

And, on another occasion, he told us this: “The most important thing for young women’s division members is Buddhist study. Without study, you cannot be of great use for kosen-rufu. Study hard.”

In those days, a French roll cost 10 yen, and daily wages were around 300 yen. Kansai members willingly spent as much as 2,000 yen on a copy of the Gosho. They walked to Gakkai activities with the Gosho in their bag all the time, just as samurai would carry their swords.

*Nobuyuki Yanagihara, then a college student*

When I met Sensei for the first time, he asked me. “Do you have a Gosho?” I answered, “Yes. I have one, though it’s my father’s.” Then Sensei said, “The Gosho is the sword of faith. Why don’t you have one of your own? You should get one even by doing a side job if you don’t have enough money.” I soon started a part-time job and bought a Gosho.

*Mitsuo Yamamoto, then a Squad Chief*

I once had to deliver some documents to the Kansai Headquarters and when I opened the door to President Ikeda’s
office I saw him reading the Gosho at his desk. He was there holding it with both hands, studying very intensely.

Having seen me hesitating as to what to say, he said, “Thank you for your trouble,” then immediately went back to his reading. I put the documents on the desk and left the office. His attitude towards study made me realise the real meaning of “a great swordsman’s discipline”.

Setsuko Sugihara, then a Young Women’s Division Unit Chief
We had a Buddhist study seminar for lecturers with President Ikeda. Since I was so curious how he could give us such wonderful lectures, I took the liberty of looking at his Gosho during the break.

There were a lot of passages underlined in red, but no notes except for a few circles around some words. Obviously, he was treating his copy of the Gosho as a treasure. This was the moment I became deeply determined to challenge myself in Buddhist study by emulating his attitude towards the Gosho.

Setsuko Umemoto, then a Chapter Standing Committee member
Ikeda Sensei once gave a Gosho lecture on behalf of President Toda. It was on ‘The Offering of an Unlined Robe’. I was supposed to act as emcee. Prior to the meeting, Ikeda Sensei gave me guidance, saying, “The emcee should jot down the format of the meeting on a memo pad and read it out beforehand.” After the meeting, Ikeda Sensei encouraged me, saying, “Thank you for your efforts. You did a good job.”

Tadashi Murata, then Vice Chapter Chief
In those days we had very few members in the study department. On one occasion I had to give a Gosho lecture to the examinees.
Sensei unexpectedly attended the meeting held at the Kansai Headquarters and sat right beside me. In spite of my efforts to change places, Sensei insisted I should remain in my place, saying, “Mr Murata, you’ll be fine. Exert your utmost.”

I was flustered. Ikeda Sensei was silently listening to my lecture, sitting right next to me. I was blushing, overcome with embarrassment. I didn’t even know what I was saying, but somehow got through my lecture.

Ikeda Sensei said, “No matter what lecture you may give, you should imagine that I am always sitting beside you.” I answered, “Certainly.” Nevertheless, I was regretful and ashamed that I didn’t understand his true intentions for doing what he did.

Later I suddenly remembered that Ikeda Sensei often said, “On behalf of President Toda ...” Toda Sensei was always beside Ikeda Sensei. His words gave me a glimpse of the profound bond between mentor and disciple. After this incident, I changed my attitude towards my faith as well as study.

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**MEET EACH AND EVERY MEMBER**

*All the members should stand up with faith*

January 5. On the second day of his stay in Kansai, what was it that President Ikeda did first with all his might? It was to give personal guidance, which he engaged himself in from morning till night.

“The reason why Shin’ichi Yamamoto intended to give heartfelt guidance to each Kansai member was that he knew it was the key to winning all struggles. To achieve the most difficult aim, first and foremost, the carrying out of each activity with a full sense of joy is indispensable. To fulfil this, all the Kansai members must stand up with faith, then it will be accomplished” (*The Human Revolution*).
“I meet each and every member in person to give guidance.” President Ikeda took the initiative to show us how to act. The campaign in Kansai began with thorough sessions of personal guidance.

_Fusae Fukuzumi, then a Women’s Division District Chief_
My husband Hisashi, then a block chief, died of tuberculosis on December 30, 1955. He left me with five children, including a fifth-grader and a four-month-old baby. I was also in debt.

“What will happen to me?” I wondered. At that time, I was a district chief in the women’s division.

On the evening of January 5, I was in a room at Kansai Headquarters with my baby and Mrs Aya Shiraki, who was Osaka Women’s Division Chapter Chief. Sensei walked into the room, apparently exhausted because of all the guidance he had been giving. He must have been planning to rest a while before a district leaders meeting scheduled for the evening.

“This lady has lost her husband,” Mrs Shiraki said, introducing me to Sensei.

Sensei remembered that he had met my husband at the Gosho lecture meeting and said, “Your husband was a nice person.” He also asked about my children and present situation.

“Don’t cry. If you cry, the tears will make your husband sad. There were reasons why you got married to someone who died young. Now you must be feeling unhappy. However, you have the Gohonzon. It is the greatest fortune one could have. In your house, you have the Gohonzon instead of your husband. The Gohonzon will protect you. You will definitely become happy in the next five, ten or twenty years. I will also take you overseas.”

The guidance, given with all his heart, lasted for one and a half hours.

_Hisayo Owaki, then a Women’s Division Unit Chief_
On the occasion of Sensei’s visit to Mr Shiraki’s residence, I tried to invite members who wanted to receive guidance as well as
help out at the meeting place. On that very day, numerous Gakkai members came and I was only one of the staff members that were there.

Nevertheless, one day many years after that, when I was going to pay homage to our first president, Makiguchi Sensei’s grave at the Head Temple, there was a group of ten people coming down from the slope which we were about to climb. When I tried to make way for them, someone called out, “Hi, I haven’t seen you for quite a while!” It was Sensei! Sensei remembered me. He even held out his hand to shake hands with me. I was overcome with surprise.

Sadako Sakai, then a Young Women’s Division Vice Corps Chief

I went to Itami Airport with my fellow YWD members hoping to greet Sensei when he came to Osaka. Sensei kindly invited us, who were nervously waiting for him, to accompany him to the Kansai Headquarters. We were all so thrilled!

After arriving at the headquarters, Sensei looked at me as I was nervously standing in the corner of the room, and penned some words of encouragement for me on an airline postcard.

“Although uprooted again and again, the dandelion blooms smilingly.” Then, he said, “Ah, something is missing.”

“Oh yes, it should be ‘all the more’ smilingly.” He added “all the more” in the poem.

I was really surprised because at the time I was having difficulties with various people and thought time and again of quitting the practice. Sensei encouraged me as if he understood my suffering.

“Yes, I will smile brightly, with faith as my basis.” This became the turning point of my life.

Socks in the closet

President Ikeda paid close attention to each member. One day he called out to a young men’s division member, saying, “Don’t you
keep a number of socks in the closet of your apartment?"

The young man was surprised to hear this, wondering if Sensei had come to his apartment in his absence. “How do you know that?” he replied.

“I myself used to live in a small apartment. That’s why I can tell how you are living now.”

President Ikeda shared his own experience in his youth. “Due to financial difficulties, I couldn’t afford a pillow, so I used folded newspapers. I continued to put on torn socks because I couldn’t buy new ones. But there lies the true training and growth of youth,” President Ikeda said, stressing the point, “when they struggle to live on their own and dedicate themselves to Gakkai activities.”

Moved by President Ikeda’s warm consideration, the young men’s division member started to talk about himself. He had to give up going to college and work as an apprentice.

“I once wanted to go to college myself,” President Ikeda said. “But I had to support President Toda’s company. In addition, I was busy with Gakkai activities. So I gave up the idea of going to college.”

“But youth must bear in mind,” President Ikeda continued, “that if you want to conquer the world, you must first overcome your own grief. The Soka Gakkai is the world’s foremost college. Please be assured that you can learn in the Gakkai.” President Ikeda’s warm encouragement touched the young man’s heart.

Sakae Tomii, then a Women’s Division District Chief
My husband, a good-natured man and the head of a Tsuruhashi shopping street, became a debt guarantor, and this resulted in our having to leave our house. My husband and I lost the means to support our family of 12. We lived under the overhead railway at Tsuruhashi Station for a while.

We made a house by hitching up a tent to iron poles that supported a platform. We put tatami mats over the foundation and slept on them. People often spoke ill of us, saying, “You can
go and see at the station what will happen to you if you take up this faith.” It was awful.

We needed two buckets of water to make a living and to cook. The neighbours didn’t even give us that much water. President Ikeda actually visited us in this tent.

After a while my husband, who had just returned from a summer training course, said that when he met President Ikeda and reported to him about living at the station, Sensei said, “I know. I visited you there.” He even remembered our home at the station.

Takako Kobayashi, then a Women’s Division District Chief

In February 1956, a year after taking up faith in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, I, a young and inexperienced 23-year-old at the time, was appointed to the post of the women’s division district chief. When Sensei visited Osaka, I had an opportunity to tell him about my appointment.

Sensei gave me guidance, saying, “All that is necessary is for you to perceive the Gohonzon, the object of devotion, as absolute.”

Moreover, seeing my square-jawed face, he encouraged me, saying, “You look like Audrey Hepburn!”

Sensei continued encouraging members day after day.

Encouragement with a delivery of Chinese noodles

Iwao Murata, then a Group Chief

It was January 15. While we were having a meeting for the members in charge of organisational statistics, Sensei paid us an unexpected visit. At the time I had assumed a lot of responsibility in managing organisational statistics. And at the meeting Sensei spoke as though he were talking to each and every one of us personally.
“Your duty in managing statistics is like facilitating the smooth flow of blood in the human body. If the flow stagnates, the body dies. Therefore, the importance of your mission is immeasurable.”

Until then, our division had not been in the limelight. It was unheard of for a top-ranking leader to encourage any member of the organisational statistics division. So everyone there was amazed to hear Sensei speak to them directly.

“Presently all of you are accumulating unseen virtues through your hard work behind the scenes which will never fail to yield visible rewards. Please take care of yourself.”

Although none of us knew very much about Sensei at the time, we were nevertheless extremely impressed by his consideration towards us. “He is young, but what a great person he is!”

After that, Sensei placed an order for a delivery of Chinese noodles for us as we were working late. Noodles were such a delicacy at that time. I shall never forget the taste of those delicious noodles for as long as I live!

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**GIVING THOROUGH GUIDANCE TO THE MEMBERS**

*The springboard for great expansion*

A good general will make good men. The noteworthy activity of Kansai in February was thoroughly giving guidance to members. January was the month to lay the foundation of the members’ faith through learning about the Daishonin’s Buddhism, and February was the month for giving guidance to members. Sensei took the initiative in giving personal guidance to each member and started attending many discussion meetings.

As a result, the Osaka chapter, which had been Number One in the number of shakubukus till then, slipped to the second rank,
after the Kamata chapter. “Thorough guidance to members” became a trigger for the great historical leap in March.

_Hitoshi Tsuji, then a Young Men’s Division Group Chief_

One day I witnessed Sensei giving guidance to a women’s division member by quoting the Gosho. He asked her politely questions such as “What brought you to believe in this Buddhism?” or “How’s your family doing?”

She answered, “It was my child’s illness. The doctors had given up on my child, but I was told by a friend of mine that my child would be cured of the illness if I believed in this Buddhism.”

Sensei encouraged her warm-heartedly and with confidence. “I know you are having a hard time now, but please never give up! You’ll be all right. The Daishonin says, ‘Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?’ (WND-1, 412) ‘What sickness’ in this passage refers to any kind of illness. There are no exceptions. However, the most important thing here is to believe that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. The roar of a stray cat doesn’t work.”

All of us there were listening to Sensei’s earnest words to her as if he were talking to each one of us.

This is it! This Buddhism is so great! The benefits from this Buddhism are so amazing! I was so impressed by his spirit and his words based on the Gosho.

At that time, whenever we asked our senior leaders for guidance, they just said, “You do shakubuku first and then come back for guidance.”

Faith can change one’s life. If we participate in activities with an overflowing sense of joy, confident that we can bring about this change, there is no reason why we cannot get positive results.

_Miki Abe, then a Women’s Division Group Chief_

The centre for all activities in the area was a small house and so we often heard the sound of someone climbing the stairs.
It was in early February that we had four guests at the discussion meeting. In the middle of the meeting, we heard footsteps of someone coming up the stairs. “Good evening. How are you?” Sensei came in speaking in an improvised Osaka dialect.

Sensei’s familiarity made us feel as if we were being embraced with joy. Sensei spoke to the non-members. “Why don’t you practise with us and become happy!” Those few words made the three people say “Yes.”

All of us present at the meeting were caught by surprise because although we had spent close to two hours doing shakubuku, not one guest agreed to start practising.

*Mitsuko Hirata, then a Women’s Division Unit Chief*
Sensei talked to the last person patiently. Finally he said, “If you take up this faith for a year and your wishes don’t come true, I will take full responsibility.” Sensei promised. His powerful conviction made even that person decide to join.

**Divide the organisation area-wise into five**

The organisation in those days was formed along vertical lines as a rule, each member belonging to the same local organisation as the person who had introduced him or her to the practice. However, President Ikeda aimed to re-organise the Soka Gakkai organisation so as to shed light on the local area from the very beginning. He had been dispatching leaders to Osaka since the end of the previous year in order to prepare for the formation of local organisations.

He divided Osaka City into two areas and the other cities of Osaka Prefecture into three so that he could keep the members speedily and well informed of his instructions and enable the leaders to thoroughly look after the frontline of the organisation.

He considered putting the right people in the right places in these five areas of Osaka Prefecture. Leaders from Tokyo, as well as the local leaders, were re-grouped into teams to be responsible for each area.
Reminiscing about those days, the then local leader said: “If a local leader was young, he would team up with a senior leader from Tokyo. If the local leader was senior in age, the leader from Tokyo would be young. In this way, Sensei thought everything out carefully. I was trained by his instruction, ‘One must bear in mind the two keywords in handling human resources: ‘conservation’ and ‘innovation’. Soka Gakkai aims to put both into practice. In order to win a victory, we must first be successful with human resources.’”

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Iwao Murata, then a Men’s Division Group Chief
As a member of the organisational statistics division I developed a strong passion for my mission through Sensei’s warm encouragement.

Sensei’s fight for kosen-rufu breathed life into the “block” system in Kansai. I devoted myself as a member of the statistics division to thoroughly grasp the situations of all members. As a result, I noticed there was a huge difference between the numbers of household memberships according to the block system and those according to the vertical line system.

In order to bridge the gap, I suggested that we make out two kinds of cards, a “block card” and a “group card” for each household. This was the first trial in Japan.

Carrying these cards with us, we visited members who were not confirmed as members of a block. Sometimes they rejected us, saying, “I am not a member.” Then we immediately contacted the leaders of the tatesen (vertical line) written on the cards. The leaders said “No kidding!” and rushed over to shakubuku the so-called member again.

Woven with both warp and weft, the organisation grew stronger. The cards enabled us to grasp the real situation in a short period of time. This became the driving force in our propagation activities.

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THE LOTUS SUTRA IS “KNOWLEDGE RELATING TO THE GENERAL’S STRATEGY”

In tune with our mentor

One of the leaders dispatched from Tokyo reminisced: “Sensei had been struggling for victory in the campaign and earnestly chanting daimoku. He then sensed the eternal truth that the Lotus Sutra was the general’s strategy. We had never realised this until later when we read about it in the novel, The Human Revolution. Such was our ignorance.

“Despite not knowing this, we had conceitedly considered ourselves to be great leaders. Looking back, I’m sure we all realised that we must have caused Sensei great inconvenience. Therefore, we were trained and fostered by him very severely. Eventually, we learned that only when we attune ourselves to our mentor can we tap immense capabilities from within ourselves. This was the leader’s strategy.”

Yoshiyuki Asai, then a Young Men’s Division Corps Chief

Sensei said, “There are four types of leaders: great leaders, intelligent leaders, recklessly bold leaders and foolish leaders. Either intelligent or bold leaders do not suffice. We should be great leaders of kosen-rufu who combine wisdom with courage.”

Sensei told us many times, “Leaders should not think that they are great. Those who scold their members are disqualified as leaders. They are what I mean by foolish leaders.”

Once Sensei asked us, “If you take a clock to pieces and scatter the pieces on the sand of the dry riverbed, can you put the clock together again?”

I said, “I can’t.”

He responded, “Leaders for kosen-rufu should have precise thinking in order to be able to do that. Both foolish and savage leaders cannot assume leadership to actualise kosen-rufu.”
President Ikeda said, “Engrave this philosophy in the core of your mind.” I can still hear the sound of his words “the core of your mind” very vividly.

*The leaders’ ichinen, or determination, is the key to success*

President Ikeda devoted himself to nurturing leaders, because he believed that we couldn’t win any battle without capable leaders, and that it was a leader’s strong conviction that led everyone to victory.

President Ikeda said, “Leaders’ ichinen, or determination, decides the fate of our organisation. Let’s take a spinning top, for example. A top with a stable axis can spin very smoothly. The same can be said about our organisation. If you have a leader with strong faith in your group, then your group will certainly be active and vivid. Everything can be explained in the light of ‘The True Aspect of All Phenomena’.

Nichiren Daishonin says in the Gosho, “If the lord of the castle is brave, his soldiers will also be brave. If the lord is a coward, then his soldiers will also be cowards” (GZ, 979). The Daishonin wrote, “In battles, soldiers regard the general as their soul” (WND-1, 613).

President Ikeda also said, “We need only one great leader in order to change a disorderly crowd of a thousand people into an elite troop. He could even change a workhorse into a fleet horse. Everything is decided by just one leader’s conviction.”

President Ikeda didn’t miss any chance to give us guidance. For example, he gave us guidance while taking a walk with us, even in a car, and at almost every opportunity he had to do so. He gave us actual examples. And this is how his philosophy penetrated our hearts.

*Giichiro Shiraki, then Osaka Chapter Chief*

Sensei often visited Osaka as general commander of the battle. He attentively taught us — who, like a disorderly crowd, knew nothing — everything we needed to know, including the battle of
propagation, the mission of the Soka Gakkai, how to raise capable people, how to build an organisation, and so on.

Once I was told by Toda Sensei, “All you have to do is follow Daisaku.” And I did just what he had said.

A swan in the moats of Osaka Castle

While walking along the moats of Osaka Castle, we saw a swan. A youth division leader said, “Sensei, there’s a swan swimming along at ease, isn’t there?”

Sensei replied, “Yes,” and asked him, “But look at what you can’t see about the swan swimming at ease.” Then the youth leader answered, “I can’t see what I can’t see about it.” He didn’t seem to understand what Sensei was trying to say.

Finally Sensei said, “In fact, the swan moves its right leg and left leg restlessly. This is the very attitude that leaders should have. You leaders put on airs in comfort in front of fellow members. You probably would put on even more airs in my absence. It is not the right thing to do as leaders. Leaders must exert themselves behind the scenes. This is what we call yumyou shojin or “exert oneself bravely and vigorously”.

Win over yourself rather than winning in activities

Win over yourself rather than winning in activities — being on the offensive is the best defence. These are the two pillars for any struggle. “There’s no way you can win in activities if you can’t first win over yourself. This is what ‘praying’ means. Being on the offensive is the best defence. This means ‘taking action’. These are all the things that I learned while training under President Toda.” The leaders of that time all say that President Ikeda’s guidance always shone with wisdom received from President Toda.
One chilly day in January, our beloved mentor, President Toda, was in the president’s room in the Kansai headquarters warming himself at the *hibachi*, or a charcoal brazier, and talking to the then women’s division chapter leader, the late Mrs Shiraki.

“Dai is really great, you know. He’s a capable leader. He’s going to achieve greater things than me. Listen carefully now. We’re all going to support Dai, do you understand? If not, you can’t even imagine what will happen!” “Dai”, needless to say, means President Ikeda.

Mrs Shiraki renewed her vow to follow President Ikeda. However, she says that at the time “I didn’t know what President Toda was trying to say.” Only after President Toda had passed away did she realise that those words were actually President Toda’s last will and testament.

*Turning into the “Queen” when in the enemy’s position*

One day, President Ikeda was playing Shogi or Japanese chess with a senior leader in Kansai. President Ikeda was moaning, and the leader said, “Sensei, there is no use moaning that way.” As he saw the Kansai leader’s honest attitude, President Ikeda smiled wryly and explained plainly the reason why he was moaning.

“A *fu*, or ‘pawn’, is only a foot soldier when it is in its ally’s position. However, when it is in the enemy’s position, it turns into a ‘queen’. This signifies that if you are trained, you can be a capable person. If you don’t advance, you cannot become ‘queen’.”

He also talked about the *keima*, or knight: “You tend to take good care of the members who are actively participating in activities. However, this is not good. The *keima*’s presence is important. While the *keima* sits there, the enemy cannot move. Moreover, if it moves inappropriately, your position will be thrown...
into disorder. Suppose there is a men’s division member who attends the discussion meeting, but he doesn’t do anything. You may say that he is not a good member. Is it really true? Someone can influence people even though he only sits down. His existence is equivalent to the *Keima*. It is not true that only active persons are capable persons. You need to be broadminded to be able to take care of members who are not active. Otherwise, you cannot take the initiative as a leader. Things should be viewed from both angles.”

*Guidance embodying hope and strictness*

President Ikeda told leaders at the time about what counts in giving guidance. He said, “When you talk at a big meeting, keep three things in mind: first, talk about the benefits of taking faith. Second, talk about hopes for a bright future. And third, talk about the strictness of faith. The audience will become strained listening to a difficult talk. But talking only about hope tends to sound fishy. Therefore, it’s important to talk combining all three points.”

President Ikeda also advised leaders that they must be capable of giving guidance in accordance with one’s own mind (*zuijii*), as well as with the minds of others (*zuitai*).

“Leaders must conduct guidance sessions in accordance with both one’s own mind and according to the minds of others. In the beginning, you must be a good listener and follow the member’s pace. This constitutes preaching in accordance with the minds of others. Then, in turn, advise him to pray to the Gohonzon and devote himself to Gakkai activities in order to change his karma. This constitutes preaching according to one’s own mind. Leaders must be able to use both methods.”

*Nobuyuki Yanagihara, then a college student*

Sensei asked us at a meeting, “Has anyone here ever been on a plane?” No one had. He said, “Let’s be victorious in activities and fly to Shirahama!” In those days, Shirahama was a beautiful seaside resort everyone looked forward to visiting by hydroplane.
Such flights existed then between Shirahama and Osaka. Sensei always gave us a dream.

Ponder and devise plans in your mind

“Preparation should be given the highest priority.” President Ikeda reiterated this point. “When we hold a meeting, we need detailed preparations to make any meeting successful. ‘[The generals in a tumultuous age] develop strategy behind drawn curtains, and victory is decided thousands of miles away [from the field of battle]’ (GZ, 183). If previous arrangements are made half-heartedly, you will see that in the ensuing results.”

Yoshiyuki Asai, then a Young Men’s Division Unit Chief
President Ikeda taught the importance of preparation so that it was instilled into our lives.

I once received guidance from President Ikeda during the car ride back from Wakayama Prefecture. He asked, “What is the name of that castle?” I answered, “It’s Kishiwada Castle.” And then he asked, “Who lived there?” I couldn’t answer his question. In preparation for the next time, I investigated the matter beforehand, but this time he asked different questions. I experienced this kind of failure several times.

One day he went to Nara Prefecture. I determined to answer this time or never, and I thoroughly looked things up beforehand and succeeded in answering his questions.

Sensei gave me this kind of practice repeatedly, and through this practice he taught me how important thorough preparation is for kosen-rufu. “The essence of struggling for kosen-rufu is preparation.” This is the key to victory.

A cherry tree

President Ikeda was taking a walk with representative members of the youth division in Sanadayama Park near the Kansai headquarters.
Cherry buds were beginning to swell, and one of the youth division members said, “We can’t wait to see the cherry blossom in full bloom, Sensei.”

President Ikeda asked him, “Do you know why cherry blossoms bloom in spring?” The member answered, “Sensei, it’s a natural process.”

“This is the truth of nature, but what if you apply this to the organisation?” President Ikeda replied. The youth division members wondered how cherry trees were related to the organisation.

President Ikeda continued, “Cherry blossoms can’t bloom in winter even if they want to since it’s too cold. However, they bud when the warmth of spring arrives.”

“Sensei, it is a matter of course,” the youth division members responded.

Sensei went on to explain: “It is the same for the organisation. If a leader is cold, buds will not swell, blossoms will not bloom and capable people will not grow. Buds swell, blossom and bear fruit only around a leader with a warm and magnanimous heart.”

The members finally understood what Sensei wanted to convey. Then they came to a dead cherry tree, and a youth division member said, “Sensei, this tree is dead.” The president replied, “It is in the state of losing its seeking spirit, of losing the will to grow. An organisation which does not have a seeking spirit will also die.”

His endeavours for fostering capable leaders who would be the core of the organisation continued. In March the ‘Early Morning Gosho Lectures’ started. District leaders attended these lectures.

Gears started to mesh within the million-volt motor towards establishing a great Kansai.
The Osaka Campaign of 1956 ...

The struggles of a “disciple who volunteered” and dared to fight.
“I want to win. I have to win. And report this victory to my mentor.”
The disciple exerted a hundred million aeons of effort in a single moment of life.
For only herein lies the path of mentor and disciple.
And now, who will tread the way?
The only path that makes the “impossible” possible!

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ATTUNING ONESELF TO ONE’S MENTOR

Early Morning Gosho Lectures

In January 1956, taking the lead and setting the finest example himself, President Ikeda started to give members guidance to take action. As a result, the energy of faith spread across each area of Kansai.
“Giving members guidance in faith thoroughly for two months awakened them to a sense of joy in their practice” (The Human Revolution). At every meeting the number of members gathering at a district was increasing remarkably.
In early March, a group of senior members were newly dispatched. “The time to fight” was ripe at last.
Though he was extremely busy, President Ikeda took a train every Friday to Osaka for the sake of Kansai’s victory. He stayed in Kansai mainly on Saturdays and Sundays. At Kansai headquarters, he led the members in gongyo early in the morning and gave guidance centred on the Gosho. He also gave guidance on how to practise. These meetings were eventually named ‘Early Morning Gosho Lectures’.

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The Human Revolution says: “Every morning, he, who kept a great desire to make the impossible possible all to himself, clarified the timely, crucial points of the contents which he should relate to senior members for the day, and which will work as the driving force through the Gosho.”

At first, the participants of the ‘Early Morning Gosho Lectures’ consisted of senior members from Tokyo and central leaders of Osaka. Thereafter, even district leaders from the local organisation started to attend these meetings.

“I have very fond memories of ‘the great campaign of kosen-rufu in Osaka’. Centring on the early morning Gosho lecture, I explained that the principle of faith, which never fails to lead us to victory, and which makes the impossible possible, originates from Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism” (Thoughts on The New Human Revolution).

In order to achieve victory, two things are vital: “strong daimoku” and “first-rate strategy and action”.

One leader explained that the “first-class strategy” was clearly shown in President Ikeda’s behaviour and in his ‘Early Morning Gosho Lectures’. Simply put, the “first-rate strategy” is to be in complete rhythm with Sensei.

Another leader sent from Tokyo said that the directions given by President Ikeda during the morning Gosho lecture was in fact the “best strategy”.

In the early morning planning meeting, President Ikeda clearly stated the campaign targets to the leaders. In February, the shakubuku target was 4,000 households. The end result turned out to be 3,986. In March, the goal of 5,000 households was set. The amazing result was 5,005 households. In view of the
steady increase in the shakubuku goals, members thought that the April target would be set at 6,000. However, this time it was set for 8,000 households.

President Ikeda decided each target precisely, sensing the members’ morale and studying the situation in the organisation. The members listened to his lectures with a clear target in mind and became filled with conviction.

The April shakubuku campaign resulted in 9,002 households. Many members were overwhelmed with surprise that the final result was 1,000 families over the April goal. The conviction that “anything is possible when we follow what Sensei teaches us” was strongly felt by each member.

Yoshiyuki Asai, then a Young Men’s Division Corps Chief

“People don’t move because an organisation is built. An organisation does not function because people are allocated. It is not the form, but life itself.” This is the principle that President Ikeda taught us. Sensei would discuss every single detail with us during the “morning Gosho lectures”. These details breathed life into the organisation.

[To be continued]

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