

Starting an Age of Human Triumph

SGI President Ikeda commemorates Nov. 18, the day the Soka Gakkai was founded.

A paean to the human spirit, sung by the people, echoed high into the clear blue sky.

We have triumphed! We have achieved a firm and lasting victory!

As in a gripping drama, we have fought and striven with a passionate fighting spirit, for the sake of the great principles of truth and justice, for the smiles of our noble fellow members and comrades. We have weathered churning seas and raging storms. And we have defied and exposed each and every nefarious plot against us, one after another, so that we could see this brilliant day, this glorious dawn of the sixty-eighth anniversary of the Soka Gakkai's founding.

Congratulations! Thank you!

Our resolute efforts to spread the Mystic Law across the globe, to 128 nations and regions, will go down in history for all time. The benefit that accrues to this achievement is boundless and immeasurable. And how unstintingly the Daishonin would surely praise us!

We can touch another person's life — and save that life.

The great Mahatma Gandhi once told his young grandson the following story: One day on a beach before dawn, a man was picking up starfish that had been washed ashore and tossing them back into the sea. He knew that when the sun rose it would dry the starfish out and kill them.

A youth walked up to the man and asked, "What are you doing?"

"I'm trying to save these starfish," the man replied.

The beach was covered with starfish too many to count. The youth said in an exasperated tone, "There is no way you can save all of these starfish. It's hopeless. Surely you must know that."

But the man, picking up another starfish and tossing it back into the sea, replied in a quiet voice, "That may be true, but still, to this starfish it makes a great difference."

Mahatma Gandhi used this story to teach his grandson that, if we can touch another person's life and save that life, we can make a tremendous difference by that very action.

The grandson to whom Gandhi told the story of the starfish is Arun Gandhi, who with his wife, Sunanda, founded the M. K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, based in the United States. Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi have traveled all around the United States conducting surveys concerning racial discrimination and spreading the message of nonviolence. Just recently, they visited the Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High Schools in Japan and gave a lecture to the students. They also attended the World Peace Youth Culture Festival in Nagoya [on November 14]. The couple have the highest praise and appreciation for the SGI and our activities around the world.

It is a momentous spiritual struggle to purge feelings of powerlessness and resignation that assign change to the realm of the impossible.

The history of our movement to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism is a history of reaching out to others and cherishing the life of each individual. The Gakkai is the only

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organization that is carrying out the spirit of that wonderful story of the starfish. Our movement focuses on the individual. It is a process of heart-to-heart communication where we share each other's problems, inspire each other in our struggles, and call forth the courage, wisdom and strength to survive all obstacles.

It is also a vigorous nonviolent struggle against external forces that threaten human dignity, such as violence and political and economic oppression, and an effort to build an age of human triumph. Such an effort demands an enormous amount of hard work and patience, however. In a sense, it is a momentous spiritual struggle to purge feelings of powerlessness and resignation that assign change to the realm of the impossible.

Yet our first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi as well as our second president Josei Toda set out fearlessly on that long, long journey.

Mr. Makiguchi once visited a famous scholar who was a good friend. At first, as they each spoke about their work, the conversation was quite warm and pleasant, but when Mr. Makiguchi began to talk about the Lotus Sutra and the greatness of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, the scholar suddenly stood up and shouted: "Get out! Get out!" He pushed Mr. Makiguchi out the front door and slammed it shut behind him. Mr. Makiguchi said, regret in his voice: "This is how Japan's top intellectuals behave. It's symptomatic of the arrogance of people of the two vehicles [that is, Learning and Realization]."

Mr. Makiguchi never intended to use the authority or influence of intellectual or political leaders to spread the Daishonin's teachings. In his encounter with the scholar, his only intent was to communicate to a friend what he knew was the true way of human existence based on the true teaching of Buddhism. Mr. Makiguchi's constant struggle was to carry that message to those who were suffering, to all humanity, and to the very depths of each individual's life — and that is the proud tradition of the Soka Gakkai.

For the sake of our century, let us set forth again on the journey of kosen-rufu.

Inheriting this spirit from Mr. Makiguchi, we have ushered in the dawn of an age of the victory of the people. Who has accomplished this enormous feat?

It is you — all of you — who have chanted and prayed for the happiness of your friends day and night, and worked hard to teach them about Buddhism and introduce them to the practice.

It is you, the inexpressibly noble members of our organization, who have continued to energetically promote the Soka Gakkai's organ publications and proclaim the truth and justice of our movement.

It is you, who have upheld the spirit of the Buddha, bravely encouraging your fellow members day after day out of selfless concern for their growth and development, while enduring the abuse and criticism of thoughtless and malicious individuals.

It is you, who, as foremost champions of humanism and peace, have risen to realize these goals in every region, proudly showing the world the greatness of the SGI through your own dauntless examples.

With the deepest respect and appreciation, I crown each and every one of you who has carried out the compassionate actions of the Buddha a monarch of the people. I shake your hand firmly and declare: "Let us go forth! For the sake of our century, let us set forth again on the journey of kosen-rufu."

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