

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S MESSAGE FOR CHINESE NEW YEAR'S A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN OF DIVERSITY

In his Feb. 6 message to a culture festival in Los Angeles celebrating Chinese New Year's, SGI President Ikeda reminds us that 'Buddhism teaches that the beautiful garden of a true human republic can be created when we manifest our full potential, at the same time always respecting human difference and diversity.'

Happy New Year to all the distinguished guests and my beloved members of the SGI family gathered today. My heartfelt congratulations on your wonderful spring festival, which marks the start of the third millennium!

I understand that this spring festival, which commemorates the Chinese New Year, will be blessed with a variety of celebratory performances by diverse ethnic groups of the United States, including the Chinese, Korean, Thai, Cambodian and Japanese peoples.

Buddhism expounds the principle of *o-bai-to-ri*, which literally means "the cherry is the cherry, the plum is the plum, the peach is the peach, and the damson is the damson." This stresses the importance of giving full, rich expression to one's individual traits. In other words, Buddhism teaches that the beautiful garden of a true human republic can be created when we manifest our full potential, at the same time always respecting human difference and diversity.

Your spring festival can therefore be called a great festival of friendship, a gathering of world citizens and a garden of individual beauty, where the flowers of ethnicity and culture blossom.

Feb. 11 is the centennial of the birth of the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda. He is known as an advocate of a new globalism that seeks human and cultural solidarity.

I believe that he must be delighted at this splendid festival, where people of many ethnic backgrounds have joyfully come together. I'm sure that he is sending you his congratulations.

"We will change the century of hatred and division into one of harmony and mutual respect, in which the world's people befriend one another." This is the spirit of the successive Soka Gakkai presidents toward achieving peace. This is the starting point of the SGI's movement for peace, culture and education.

It is my heartfelt wish that all the honorable guests attending today will heartily enjoy this festival of peace and culture, and spend a meaningful time together.

I am earnestly praying every day for the good health of all present today. I am sincerely praying every day for the prosperity of your families. Please convey my best regards to your family members who could not attend today's event.

*Daisaku Ikeda, President, Soka Gakkai International
February 6, 2000*