

**SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S NEW POEM  
'SOAR—INTO THE VAST SKIES OF FREEDOM!  
INTO THE NEW CENTURY!'**

*The following poem was written by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda and dedicated to SGI-USA members. Shin'ichi Yamamoto is a pen name President Ikeda often uses when writing poetry; he also uses it as the name of the primary character in the narrative of the Soka Gakkai's history titled The New Human Revolution, which is being serialized in the World Tribune. President Ikeda was awarded the title of World Poet Laureate by the World Poetry Society Intercontinental—Dr. Krishna Srinivas, president—on Aug. 8, 1995.*

*Dedicated to my sublime fellow SGI members in America  
—Shin'ichi Yamamoto*

**The Bodhisattvas of the Earth  
have emerged!  
They have arisen!  
They have started to stir,  
to move!**

**Here, on the American  
continent,  
the winds of a new era  
have begun to blow.  
Raising ruby goblets,  
we toast the further  
completion  
of this wondrous new path  
glittering with happiness  
and peace.**

**Lifting our voices  
high in joyous song,  
we watch the stars and stripes  
stream and ripple above  
our fifty American states,  
illuminating the future.**

**These fifty states—  
pioneering a new history,  
resounding with the peal  
of liberty's bell,  
here our cherished  
Bodhisattvas of the Earth  
have made their stand!  
Gathering speed and  
momentum  
they commence their struggle!**

**In this great land of America**

**— the world in miniature—  
new waves, a new movement,  
has arisen and begun!  
Wings unfurling,  
we take flight—  
toward a vast new century,  
toward a world of certain good.**

**Charged with new energy,  
the wings of life itself  
carry us confident  
and composed  
into a majestic future.  
Embraced by winds  
pure and vigorous,  
we fly into a new era,  
resolutely transcending  
the borders and limitations  
of old, past life.**

**Our lives renewed,  
we begin a grand movement,  
spreading the spirit of true friendship  
throughout society.**

**We have awakened to the truth  
that within this state of life  
is to be found limitless strength, joy, reality  
— our true selves—  
brilliant with lasting  
and glorious light.**

**“No wind or tempest,  
will rend or break these wings.  
For in the depths of my life  
I have found the**

very philosophy,  
the rich completeness  
long sought by scholars and philosophers.”

“Whatever waves crash  
over me  
I will know no fear!  
Even if the lure of lethargy  
lies ahead,  
my spirit, like the dawn,  
will continue to shine  
radiantly.”

“I have risen up,  
with a sun-filled soul.  
I have no time to waste  
on those decrepitly fixed  
on power and fame.”

“My spirit propels me to a life  
of fierce and ceaseless  
engagement  
for the cause of  
justice!”

“I will plunge into the midst  
of maddened, hellish flames.  
I will build there  
a path of order and right!”

There are those  
attached to power  
who walk toward  
destruction.  
There are those who wander  
through dark lives of vengeance.

But my heart progresses  
toward the attainment  
of clear, enduring value.  
So also do the hearts of my comrades.

So many friends  
are parting with the past,  
entering a new era;  
they are moving from  
old ways of living and being  
into a new century of life!

Take steady steps on  
this firm, indestructible earth.  
Lift your eyes to an endless sky

glittering with stars!

Burning with cheerful resolve,  
forge on, radiantly embracing all  
with the boundless expanse of  
your own inner sky.

We know what the times require.  
We know people’s hopes and dreams.

So many have lost hope  
in this world of ceaseless conflict,  
of mutual abuse and contempt.

Yet we are filled  
with vigorous resolve,  
upholding the principle  
for living fully,  
with unabated joy  
in harmony with the cosmos.

We will never lose hope.  
For we possess the pride  
of living to the fullest,  
a crown adorned  
with precious jewels.

We also know the end of living;  
we have confident faith  
in the eternal path of life  
beyond the horizon of death.

Fully active and  
engaged,  
we seek to reach  
those whose spirits wander  
in darkened night,  
to teach them of the moment-by-  
moment struggle  
to transform life  
in its very depths.

America!  
This land of freedom  
in which I live.

In the early years of the twentieth  
century,  
the founding  
president of our movement,  
Tsuneshaburo Makiguchi,

saw in America  
the land where  
future civilizations  
would encounter and unite.

Josei Toda, our second president,  
often recalled that it was  
America that brought  
freedom of religion to post-war Japan,  
opening the way  
for a peace movement based  
on this Buddhism to unfold.  
“Daisaku!” he would say,  
“I want to go to the U.S.  
to repay our debt of gratitude!”

And thus, as their direct disciple,  
I determined to take the first step  
in my travels for peace  
here in my beloved America.

And I am determined  
to work with my American friends  
to assure that the United States  
always enjoys  
trust, prosperity and security.

As we greet the night,  
together let us offer  
prayers of appreciation.  
Together let us offer  
vows of construction.  
And let us, with clear voices,  
sing the future’s songs.

Each day a vibrant, energetic dance...  
Each morning and evening  
we delight in the  
limitless company  
of nature’s benevolent forces.

How noble are your prayers  
as you encourage your friends:  
“The breezes of happiness  
will blow through your life as well!  
May the clouds disperse  
and the blue skies shine!”

How inspiring you are  
as you appeal to your friends  
with a beautiful, natural

human sincerity:  
“Please know, in your suffering,  
that for you, too, the times of wind and rain  
will give way to clear and balmy days.  
You without doubt will experience  
days of harmony and victory!”  
We know  
there is no greater power  
than that of a pure and noble spirit.

And we know  
a path of mission  
that infinitely transcends  
a life without meaning,  
clamorous disputations  
or charitable efforts  
whose real purpose is fame.

We grieve  
for those who are drifting into old age  
ignorant of life’s true meaning;  
for those who are carried along  
by days of pretense  
never knowing true youthfulness,  
the lushness of fresh green growth.

More effectively than  
countless doctoral theses,  
you are sharing with others  
the profound and subtle  
teachings of Buddhism.  
You are indeed the most remarkable  
people of knowledge and learning!

Beyond the politicians  
and their eloquent discussions  
of political programs;  
beyond the  
sociologists  
proud of their in-depth  
investigations,  
their grasp of world events  
and their  
statistics...  
Your wisdom and your actions  
resonate precisely in  
the depths  
of the lives of those  
you address.  
You bring to so many weary people  
the joy and strength to live on.

As philosophers and people of action,  
you brilliantly inspire millions  
in a dynamically expanding  
process of dialogue.

And all around  
the broad and flowered  
lawns we tread,  
are the earnest words and acts  
of a sincere humanism.

Our conversations and exchanges  
give rise to joy.  
New doors swing open  
like the masterful turn  
of a graceful dancer.

“I have embraced the source  
of energy and power  
to ponder deeply  
the significance of my own life and death,  
to review the days that have passed  
while living fully into the future.  
From now on I will no longer  
be pushed and tossed by  
the fickle winds,  
for I can now look into the  
precious depths of my own life.”

“I will no longer be defeated  
by the most powerful forces of fate.  
For I now possess the secret means  
by which to confront and triumph  
over the demonic tyranny of misfortune.”

Ahead of us  
the Buddhist deities  
gather for a festive  
banquet of welcome,  
awaiting our arrival.

Today, once more,  
accumulate the treasure of experience,  
transcend and triumph  
in life's gales and storms.  
Direct your steps  
on this grand and golden path,  
which others, inspired by your example,  
will also yearn to tread.

Walk again today

this pleasant path of courage and good will,  
creating the harmonious unity of millions,  
singing the songs you love  
in a clear and resonant voice.

Today again set out  
on this broad avenue of happiness,  
occasionally pausing to take refreshment,  
always savoring the joyous company  
of true friends.

From this path can be seen  
unmistakable vistas  
of victory and flourishing.

From this path  
have been driven  
all confrontation, all conflict,  
all evil and destruction.

For we know  
that this is a way  
embodying a law, a principle  
eternal and universal.

We have bid farewell  
to a shallow, cruel, purgatorial world.  
We have declared the victory  
of our lives,  
our hearts resounding  
with a brightly burning passion.

Awake! Arise!  
That you also may know  
life's deep and genuine joy.  
Turn away from a life of sadness,  
from passive drifting,  
from tragic weeping at death and loss.

Unbowed by stubborn, arrogant folly,  
beating out the sustained rhythms  
of unsurpassed joy in life —  
walk this path toward the fruition of your  
eternal and profoundly compassionate self.

We know the hollow whistled tunes  
of pitiful lusting after fame.  
We know the faded hues  
of a weak and jealous life,  
the malicious pillaging  
of one's own being.

The questions for each and all of us—  
How will we spend our final hour?  
How will we pass our last days?

What could be the meaning  
of a life squandered in pursuit  
of superficial recognition and praise?  
Mere emptiness and vanity,  
a shred of winter wind.

So many people...  
trapped in feverish torment,  
their most strenuous exertions  
coming to naught,  
constantly lacerated  
by a suffocating  
absurdity.

Shallow and empty hearts  
are swallowed into  
darkness...  
Forgetful that none are assured  
of even tomorrow's life,

unaware that twilight comes to all,  
mindless that they walk a path  
of imprisoned confinement,  
still they desire their golden goods,  
and frantically crave their fame.

For us, this proud and brightly lit way...  
We advance with confident smiles.  
Embracing the law of cause and effect  
— this governing principle infinitely  
extending—  
we enjoy eternal protection.

Off in the distance,  
there may be those who criticize us  
with wan, foolish, sarcastic smiles.  
Concealing the pain of their own hearts,  
they watch with longing and envy—  
our lives, shining with commitment and  
courage.

Bowed with secret despair,  
their grieving hearts  
continue their bitter steps.

Those whose only desire is fame.  
We whose names are utterly unknown!  
Yet who, in the dawning of eternity,  
will perform the songs and melodies  
of life that has been lived true and with joy?

They are people of hapless misery;  
ours is a life of boundless fortune.  
They have destroyed their own future;  
we have full confidence  
in a future that continues eternally.

Laughing off  
the corrupt and degenerate,  
we know that a life free from  
all doubt and regret awaits us.

The malicious acts  
directed against us  
— ludicrous invented  
incidents  
petty empty criticism—  
only bring suffering  
upon their authors.

In our spirits and our souls  
we have developed and  
distilled  
the inner strength to win  
however intense the challenge.

In our lives is engraved  
a massive badge of "victory."

We know that this spirit—  
never fearing,  
never collapsing before hardship—  
is itself the spirit of a Buddha.

"All insult and abuse  
rebound from my soul.  
I have surmounted  
innumerable trials.  
And now about me wave  
countless banners of glory.  
Misery has no claim  
or territory  
within my heart!"

We treasure human society.  
We respect the ways of the world.

**Because Buddhism comes to life  
only in the midst of social realities.**

**No one can survive in isolation.  
Our lives are grounded in  
empathy and solidarity  
with others, with people  
and with society as a whole.**

**The sutras provide  
this penetrating insight:  
“All secular phenomena  
are manifestations of the Buddha’s law.”**

**From the perspective of faith,  
for people who live  
with lofty and utter conviction,  
to be swayed by appearances  
is foolishness and error.  
“I do not choose  
or discriminate among them  
whoever they may be—  
this wise and clever friend;  
this person wracked by  
poverty’s pain;  
the person plagued  
by the deepest sleeplessness;  
this person isolated  
in the remote regions of being different...  
I share life with them all,  
live in profound meaning,  
live as a good friend to each.”**

**Unfathomable mystery  
of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth...  
Charged with the solemn  
early morning task of prayer,  
you have emerged,  
you are pushing up  
the shoots and buds of  
new growth  
here in America.  
Your voices, resounding to  
the heavens,  
are earnest, devoted and sincere.**

**That bell  
is not an evening bell,  
but the bell of dawn.  
Your face is brightly lit  
by the light of the Mystic Law.**

**Your gaze is focused on  
the Buddha.  
As you fuse with this  
magnificent  
state of being,  
there arises within you  
a life vibrantly filled  
with the ultimate joy  
of the universe  
— your Buddha nature —  
eternal, unceasing and boundless.**

**Transcending  
the rewards and punishments  
of the world,  
beyond apathy,  
beyond calumny and abuse...**

**Advancing step by step,  
the bodhisattva’s heart,  
the bodhisattva’s life,  
feels not the slightest pain or tremor  
however fierce the raging rains  
of insult and slur.**

**Those who libel us,  
flaming with envy,  
are unconscious of the  
dark shadows enveloping  
their ashen, aging spirits.**

**America!  
Where people leave behind  
old authorities and conventions  
as they seek to create  
a new, ideal nation.  
This great America!  
Struggling for freedom  
and for human rights.**

**As one poet noted:  
The twentieth century  
has been a century of humans  
murdering their fellows,  
a truly hellish century.**

**Before us lies  
the ominous quaking  
of life’s tortured pulse.**

**People whose eyes are filled with pain.**

People with sad, abandoned eyes.  
Eyes that gleam sharp and bestial...

And yet we advance unhesitating  
into the very midst of humanity.  
We advance with proudly beating hearts,  
among our fellow human beings.

Hot tears of compassion  
borne secretly in our breasts,  
we take no notice of the sad,  
ignorant, barbarian songs.  
Forging characters  
of true strength and great depth,  
our eyes burn with hope.  
Our blood also burns  
with the determination  
to ease the pain  
of the troubled and suffering.

Speaking at the University of Denver,  
with which I have a strong bond,  
the future president, John F. Kennedy,  
uttered these words:

— It is said that civilization  
is a race between education  
and catastrophe.  
It is you who will decide  
which of these will win! —

Toward the civilization  
of the twenty-first century;  
for the sake of the young  
    leaders and scholars;  
for the sake of the  
peace, prosperity and joy  
that come from humanistic  
    education!  
Soka University of America  
has been constructed...  
Gazing out upon the waves

of a monarch Pacific Ocean,  
carrying the burden  
of the hopes and expectations  
of the centuries,  
its construction has been  
    matched  
by innumerable voices  
raised brightly in song,  
by an unending array  
of young people ascending  
that vibrant hill in Orange  
    County.

For the sake of  
these free, young spirits,  
I have determined to spend  
the culminating years of my life  
in this America I love,  
together creating infinite  
    memories,  
sounding the reverberant  
    trumpet of the dawn.

We advance with this cry:  
We praise, salute and call for  
    peace!  
We praise and salute daily life!  
And above all we praise, salute  
and call forth happiness!

There is no paradise;  
it does not exist.  
Therefore walk forward  
into this world of suffering!  
And there you will see  
the reality of the dream,  
of this eternally bright,  
eternally joyful and serene,  
this eternally noble dream.

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