

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S JAN. 2 POEM THE WINGS OF YOUTH, THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE

About This Poem

This poem is the first of this length from SGI President Ikeda this year. Last year alone, he wrote some 50 poems, in which he described his dreams for the kosen-rufu movement of the SGI and the happiness of all people.

The Soka Gakkai, which has been engaged in propagating Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to secure human happiness and world peace for 70 years, has been frequently maligned by certain segments of Japanese society. The Japanese tabloid media, for instance, often carries outlandish reports of fabricated scandals involving the Soka Gakkai, which invariably originate from people who, out of fear or jealousy, criticize President Ikeda and publicly seeking to disband the organization.

Soka Gakkai members are forced to confront these stories every day in their workplaces and among their friends and families. That practitioners of this Buddhism will encounter such opposition is predicted in the Lotus Sutra and the Daishonin's writings, as President Ikeda expresses in this poem.

A prime focus of the Soka Gakkai's detractors in Japan has been the membership's support of the Komeito political party, which is participating in a major Upper House election this summer. This poem, written within such a context, addresses the challenges facing the Soka Gakkai members from the fundamental standpoint of faith. While recognizing that the situation in Japan is entirely different from that in the United States — where there is absolutely no organizational involvement in the electoral process — this poem can be very encouraging to SGI-USA members. President Ikeda's words of conviction focus on the ultimate spirit of faith and give us a fresh awareness that Buddhism is concerned with winning in all endeavors for the happiness of all.

I will win.
I am determined to win!
I will not lose.
I am determined not to lose!
I will win for my own sake
And for the sake of truth and justice.

Never be defeated
By contemptible evil!
Justice
Brings people happiness.
Evil
Enslaves them
And brings them misery.

True justice
Exists in the human heart.
And Buddhism
Of course

Is a teaching of truth and justice.
Our enemies
Have this Buddhism
Yet they exploit it.
We, too,
Have this Buddhism,
The same teaching and scriptures.

But it all comes down to
How that Buddhism is practiced,
Whether, in accord with
 the great compassion
Of the Buddha,
The teachings are propagated and
 put into action
And its followers work
For the welfare of human society.

They
Are robbers of the Law,
Exploiters of the Law.
They do not work
For the sake of Buddhism;
They misuse Buddhism
For their own ends.
Thus we see
A stark difference between us
 and them,
Thus we see
That it all comes down
To faith.

The ultimate purpose of faith
Is becoming heroes of life.
Giving our lives unsparingly
To spread the Law
Makes us champions of humanity.

Do not fear
Envious attacks!
Laugh away
Malicious insults!

Plotting despicably
To bring down
Through vicious lies
Those who are devoted to truth

and justice
Is an ancient formula seen the world over.

Towering sage Nichiren Daishonin said,
“Let others hate you if they will.” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 464)

That great pioneer of the kosen-rufu movement,
First Soka Gakkai president
Tsunesaburo Makiguchi said,
“To be despised by fools is
the greatest honor.”
Josei Toda, our second president, said,
“To be praised by fools is
the greatest disgrace.”
(See WND, 287)

To participate in elections
Is the right of the people,
Protected by our constitution.
All have absolute freedom
To cast their votes as they wish.
In Japan today,
Charges that the Soka Gakkai
Is violating the principle
Of separation of church and state
Are completely unfounded.
They amount to nothing but envy
At the stunning
Advance of the forces for peace.

A true force for peace
Will advance with determination
And overcome all such ridiculous attacks!

The Swiss philosopher
Carl Hilty said
That the ambitious
Are always envious.

Those who concoct
Base, foolish slander
Must know that
They themselves
Are madly lost
In a mind and a world of
hideous darkness.
In Buddhism,

The treacherous Devadatta is cited
As the epitome of a man's envy,
While a poisonous snake,
As that of a woman's envy.
Every traitor who turned on Shakyamuni,
Jealous of the one they owed so much,
Fell, without exception,
Into the state of Hell.

Even during the Daishonin's lifetime,
This phenomena was seen,
As the Daishonin himself says:
"Among those who believed at first,
Many later discarded their faith,
Fearing that society would reject them.
Among these are some
Who oppose me more furiously
Than those who slandered
From the beginning." (WND, 502)

In the same way
We who are in complete accord
With the Buddha's intent and decree
Know full and well
That those who curse and speak ill of us
Are ultimately headed only toward
The wretched misery of a life of defeat.

"We must never forget the kindness
That others have done us."
These are the words
Of the famous Chinese work,
Intrigues of the Warring States,
Warning against ingratitude.
They are also words
That Mr. Toda
Spoke with special force
When teaching me Chinese literature
In my studies
At "Toda University."

And there is also
A passage from another Chinese classic,
Book of Songs,
"A wise man builds a fortress,"
Meaning that every wise and
strong person

Builds and fortifies himself.

Do not fear!
Never, ever fear!

There is a difference
Between being popular
And being right.
A person dedicated to right
Is a humanistic philosopher
Who strides
The great path of truth and justice,
Though showered with abuse
And lashed by storms of criticism
and insult.
A person who is popular
Only floats
On the bobbing waves of
Public estimation.

We,
With the swift eye of the Buddha
And lightning action,
Advance unerringly
On the road to the future.

As we dream of
A new century,
A new year,
A new community,
A new human harmony,
A new age of our own,
Our hearts dance
At the prospect of making them
A reality.

Shakyamuni
Sharply observed that
This human realm
In which we live
Is ruled by devil kings.

Devils are robbers of life.
They are demons who obstruct
Those who practice the correct teaching
And strive for truth and justice.
Such demons

Eat their way into the lives
Of the powerful
And the envious.
They work to thoroughly confound
the efforts
Of the practitioners
Of the correct teaching and doctrines.

It is this scenario,
Described in the Lotus Sutra,
That we find ourselves in.
Waging an eternal battle
Against those devil kings,
We have heartily confronted
The persecutions that have beset us.

That is why
The Buddhas and bodhisattvas
Of the ten directions
Cannot fail to praise
Our noble deeds and actions,
Which accord with the Buddha's teaching.

That the demons
Of jealousy and slander
Should attack
A respected individual
Dedicated to truth and justice
Is an unchanging law of life—
It is also a principle of Buddhism.

All around
A rain of heartlessness
Poured down.
And
Not a single person
Had strong enough conviction
To try to stop injustice.

People's hearts can be frightening.
They can be ugly,
They can be difficult to believe.

People of evil intent
Who happily tar the good name
Of the honest and upright;
The mentality of casting poisonous filth

Into the world of truth;
Fabrications overflowing with
 contradictions;
And the attitude of a venomous serpent,
Without reason or principle,
Consumed only by envy.

The Chinese philosophical treatise,
Penetrating the Classic of Change,
Tells us,
“The purpose of writing
Is to record the Way.”
Writing is meant
To transmit the correct path
To future generations.

Again and again,
With spiteful, mechanical behavior,
They create and spread
A false and misleading impression.
Willfully twisting the meaning
Of freedom of speech,
They perpetrate their reckless violence
With impunity.

Yet
The Daishonin writes:
“If I do not call forth
These three enemies of the Lotus Sutra,
Then I will not be
The votary of the Lotus Sutra.
Only by making them appear
Can I be the votary.” (see WND, 53)

That we will have enemies
Is to be expected.
That they will attack us
Is to be expected.

Do not lament!
Do not grieve!
You whose lives
Are replete beyond measure
Possess faith.
Nothing surpasses faith.
Nothing can beat it.
That is the mark of true faith.

As individuals who cherish
Our vow from time without beginning,
Our journey through life
Goes on to the ends of the earth—
No, it continues eternally
Across the three existences of life.

Abandoning fragile courage,
We advance
Filled with the spirit of the new century,
On the great ship of true faith
Of eternal life,
With our brave-hearted
And wondrous comrades.

Hilty commented
That when your head fills
With problems and worries,
And when on sleepless nights
Anxious feelings assail you,
The only possible answer is
“Onward!”

In the new dawn,
When the stage of the old, dark age
Has been destroyed
And the ugly battle
Of cold-hearted individuals is over,
We, fellow members in faith,
Praising and encouraging
Each other,
Will build a regal stage,
Pristine and majestic,
For the joyous champions of humanity.

As the Daishonin says:
“The more gold is heated in the flames,
The brighter will be its color;
The more a sword is whetted,
The sharper it will become.
And the more one praises
The blessings of the Lotus Sutra,
The more one’s own blessings
will increase.” (WND, 673)

A great thinker has said:
“I will fill each year

Of this precious life
With the content of 10.
I will leave my mark.
I will fight to leave a record
Of truth and justice.”

He also observed:
“The quality of our years
Is determined by
The profound substance
Of how we live our lives
And by the accomplishments
We achieve.
How empty
Is an uneventful life
Lived longing only for idle dreams.”

We must live our lives in earnest.
In that earnestness
Exist philosophy,
Thought,
Compassion.
There is purpose —
People’s happiness,
The welfare of society,
And peace.
A life that is frivolous and vain
Is not for us!

The sea
Has its shallows.
It also has the depths.
True faith
Is the measure that determines
The depth of each person’s life.

We —
Conscious of our responsibility
As foremost champions of the spirit,
Advancing on the great path of truth
Of past, present, and future,
Never forgetting to smile,
Casting aside
Cowardice and anxiety —
Fight on eternally
With the blazing sun at our side!
Toward a life

That knows no destruction,
Toward victory,
We will advance,
Overcoming ignominious
Human conflicts,
Winning over all.

The famous writer Goethe said
That in order to avoid stagnation
We must constantly undertake
To change,
Reform,
And rejuvenate ourselves.

Our struggle
Is proof that
We are acting in rhythm
With the Daishonin.
It is a paean
Extolling the true teachings of Buddhism,
Which are respectable beyond compare.

We are the possessors
Of the highest honor and achievement,
Heirs to life's jeweled crown
Across eternity.

I can hear the heavenly deities call to us:
"Rise up with ever greater courage!
In even greater health
Begin the struggle!
Advance with determination
To victory!"

Still more
The praise and encouragement
Of the Daishonin himself
Echo always in my ears.

And I hear the rousing voices
Of my predecessor Mr. Makiguchi
And my mentor Mr. Toda,
Broad smiles lighting their faces,
Applauding us:
"You have done well!
You have fought well!
This is the real Soka!"

Make your way joyously through life,
With a buoyant, vaulting spirit!
Do not be defeated!
You must not allow yourself to
 be defeated, ever.
Never forget your hopes for victory!
Therein
Lies true human happiness.
Therein
Lies the great, eternal river
Of truth and justice
That flows in the depths of your lives.

Your present state of being
Is a foundation shining
With the brightest golden splendor.
And it is the departure point
From which you will soar
On wings of victory
To the loftiest heights.

You must never let go
Of your vibrant spirit.
For that spirit
Will lead you to total victory.

Establish a state of life,
Communicate a state of life,
Worthy of one who upholds the great Law
That sets an imperfect future
On the course to eternal victory.

The German philosopher Fichte declared
That the ability to win
Each time brings
Inevitable victory.
He also remarked
That by repeating this process
Of victory after victory,
Our unique abilities
Are forged and strengthened.

Defeat brings misery:
Only by triumphing
Can we become happy.

With indestructible happiness

As our goal,
Let us live our lives
As champions of humanity,
Wise and fearless,
Urging ourselves forward
On rainy days,
Stormy days,
And sunny days.

We will speak out
For the sake of truth.
We will continue to speak out undauntedly
For the sake of our cause.

To protect our comrades,
To protect our freedom,
From deplorably cowardly onslaughts,
We will endure, pray,
And fight,
Fearlessly and resolutely.

The harsh persecutions
That beset the Daishonin
Were all based
On slanderous accusations.

The Daishonin writes:
“Filled with ever greater
Wrath and hate,
Never attempting to examine
The validity of my assertions,
Concocting enormous falsehoods
To deceive and confuse
The ruler and the people of our nation,
They set out to destroy me.
Not only did I face many persecutions
But I was exiled twice,
To Izu and to Sado
Until finally
I reached Tatsunokuchi,
Where my head was to fall.”

There is nothing wrong or evil
In our cause.
All of the abuse and criticism
Directed against us,
Against our faith,

Causes not the slightest
Tremor or fissure
In our hearts.

The Daishonin declared,
“If the priests of today
Did not slander me to the authorities
And have them condemn me to
 banishment,
Then this passage in the sutra
Would have remained unfulfilled.” (WND, 242)

He also said:
“I think that perhaps
It is encountering such difficulties
As have already been explained in the sutra—
Being cursed, vilified,
Attacked with swords and staves,
Shards and rubble,
And banished again and again—
That is reading the Lotus Sutra with one’s life.
My faith springs up all the more,
And I am confident about
 my next existence.” (WND, 202)

True practitioners of faith
Possess a dignity
That cannot be shaken by power.
They have a dignity
That surpasses any authority.
This is the spirit
And the being
Of those who have faith.

Though our travails may be many,
Though the arrogant
May malign us,
We have no need
To take shelter
From these onslaughts
Because we are shielded
By the strong roof
Of eternal truth.

We wear the magnificent armor
Of fundamental good.
Our strong spirit

Always shines
With bright smiles
Fresh as a spring breeze.

We are not afraid;
We will not be defeated.

Even when it may seem
That we are isolated as never before,
We will continue
To build
A realm of true glory,
Infinite and vast,
To construct
A solid fortress
That nothing can destroy.

Let the shameless
Dance madly
Where they are.
Let the uncouth
Shriek wildly
Where they are.

Our ultimate watchwords —
“Forward, ever forward!”
“Victory upon victory!” —
What a sure,
What a rousing,
Triumph for truth!

I dream
Of the grand drama of the new century
Of millions of young disciples
Spreading the wings of youth
To take flight
And soar with freedom and joy.
Indeed —
I know
This drama is already taking place.

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At the Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall
Shin'ichi Yamamoto (pen name of Daisaku Ikeda)