

'Arise, the Sun of the Century' — February 26

The Time Is Right

By JEFF FARR, Associate Editor

When SGI President Ikeda wrote the poem "Arise, the Sun of the Century," the 21st century was still 14 years away. Now that those 14 years have dwindled to four — as President Ikeda says in the poem, "Time surely flies like an arrow" — it is an interesting time to revisit the poem.

On Feb. 26, 1987, as the last activity of a monthlong visit to the United States, President Ikeda commemorated the 30th anniversary of the American kosen-rufu movement with a meeting in Los Angeles. Saying that the gathering was actually a departure into the next 30, 50 or 100 years, he introduced "Arise," which carries on this theme:

*Let us aim for the summit of eternal happiness
In the new century
Shining beyond the vast prairies.
This day, this very morning,
With great pride and conviction
Have we boldly launched
On a voyage toward a fresh beginning.*

And what a voyage it is. Buddhism teaches, as President Ikeda says in "Arise," that only our determination for kosen-rufu can open "the door to the journey toward the future."

Nichiren Daishonin, in his letter titled "Thus I Heard," writes that "although I may not be worthy of this teaching, I expound it because the time is right" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, pp. 247–8). Nichiren Daishonin created the time himself — that is, made the time right — by first deciding in 1253 to share Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with others.

Over the last 10 years, one thing among many that our voyage has taught us is that it is also up to us to create the time — make the time right.

Recently I read David S. Reynolds' *Walt Whitman's America*, in which he argues that Whitman is another person who created the time. Whitman liberated the poetic line, wrote about sex, showed that all people are equal and brought poetry to the common people of America and the world — all revolutionary ideas in the 1800s.

Whitman changed the way people think and thus changed the world. In "Arise" President Ikeda calls us "the Whitmans of kosen-rufu," expressing his hope that we be similarly progressive in our lives and our kosen-rufu activities. *Progress, progressive, progressiveness* — these words appear many times in his poem, asking us to create the time.

This Buddhism also teaches how we can create the time at any time. President Ikeda explains the phrase in the Lotus Sutra "At that time..." in this way: "'That time' is the moment you resolve from the depths of your heart: 'Now I will stand up and fight!' From that instant your destiny changes. Your life develops. History begins" (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p.33).

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the American kosen-rufu movement — after 10 years of great change in our organization and our lives. It is a time to look toward the next 10 years, toward the next century and all the time yet to come.

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