

## DAISAKU IKEDA: AN INTRODUCTION

Daisaku Ikeda is a Buddhist leader and peacebuilder, a prolific writer and the founder of a number of cultural, educational and peace research institutions around the world. He is a committed proponent of dialogue who believes that deepening the mutual understanding of people of different cultures and beliefs is key to building lasting peace in the world.

A central theme in Ikeda's philosophy is that "human revolution"—inner-motivated change—within even a single individual can positively influence all humankind. Ranging from the protection of human rights to sustainability and the empowerment of women and youth, his concerns are all underpinned by Buddhist philosophy and respect for the dignity of life.

As third president of the Soka Gakkai Buddhist association and founder of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) with more than 12 million members in 192 countries and territories, Daisaku Ikeda has developed and inspired what may be the largest, most diverse lay Buddhist movement in the world today. Based on the 700-year-old tradition of Nichiren Buddhism, the movement is characterized by its emphasis on individual empowerment and social engagement to advance peace, culture and education.

### **Biography**

Born in Tokyo, Japan, on January 2, 1928, Ikeda experienced firsthand the human loss, anguish and turmoil of war. In the chaos of postwar Japan, he came to embrace Buddhism through his encounter with educator and pacifist Josei Toda (1900–58), head of the Buddhist lay organization Soka Gakkai, who had been imprisoned for his beliefs during World War II. His wartime experiences and the inspiration he received from Toda shaped Ikeda's own commitment and are the starting point for his efforts toward the creation of a global culture of peace.

A leading proponent of Buddhist humanism, Ikeda has traveled to more than 50 countries and engaged in wide-ranging dialogues in his quest for peace. He is also a prolific author and poet, having published numerous works and co-authored dialogues with Arnold Toynbee, Mikhail Gorbachev, Hazel Henderson, Linus Pauling, Aurelio Peccei and other leading figures.

He has devoted his life to advancing peace and promoting educational and cultural exchange. In recognition of his efforts in support of the United Nations, as well as public information and education activities on such issues as disarmament, the environment and human rights, Ikeda was conferred the UN Peace Award in 1983. His achievements have since been recognized by educational and peace institutes around the world.