

DAISAKU IKEDA AS BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHER

Daisaku Ikeda writes and speaks extensively about the application of the teachings of Buddhism to daily life in the real world. He explores the core humanistic message of Shakyamuni's life and teachings, examines the relevance of the key Mahayana text, the Lotus Sutra, to today's world and unpacks its profound principles from the perspective of Nichiren Buddhism. (Nichiren was the 13th-century Japanese monk who developed the Lotus Sutra-based practice carried out by members of the SGI.)

The Lotus Sutra proclaims the infinite potential and dignity inherent in the life of each human being. It is a guide to unleashing the transformative power of each individual's life.

Ikeda's philosophy could be expressed as the effort to clarify and apply these principles within the context of contemporary society, to identify shared, universal human values that accord with the core value of the sanctity of life through the practice of dialogue, and to promote mutual understanding, cooperation and peace.

He has written widely on Buddhism, from *The Living Buddha* about the life of Shakyamuni, to the series *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra* and books such as *Unlocking the Mysteries of Birth and Death* which introduce Buddhist philosophy for Western readers.

In his 2008 peace proposal, "Humanizing Religion, Creating Peace," he comments on the role of religion in the world as follows:

"Does religion make people stronger, or does it weaken them? Does it encourage what is good or what is evil in them? Are they made better and more wise—or less—by religion?' These are the questions we need to ask of all religions, including of course Buddhism, if we are to succeed in fully 'humanizing' them."

Institute of Oriental Philosophy

In 1962, Ikeda founded the Institute of Oriental Philosophy (IOP) to promote research on the cultural heritage of Asia and compile academic material on Eastern thought and philosophy, as well as clarifying the relevance of Buddhism and other world religions in the modern world. In addition to conducting scholarship on Nichiren Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra and the philosophy of value creation, the IOP undertakes research on issues including bioethics, the global environment, women and Buddhism, and the linkages between religion and humanism. The institute also sponsors and participates in a wide range of international conferences, colloquiums and interfaith initiatives.

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