

BIOGRAPHY

Daisaku Ikeda was born in Tokyo, Japan, on January 2, 1928, to a family of seaweed farmers. He lived through the devastation of World War II as a teenager and witnessed its senseless horror which left an indelible mark on his life. His four older brothers were drafted into military service and the eldest was killed in action. These experiences fueled his lifelong quest and passion to work for peace and people's happiness, rooting out the fundamental causes of human conflict.

In 1947, at the age of 19, he met Josei Toda (1900-58), educator and leader of the Soka Gakkai lay Buddhist society whose activities are based on the teachings of the 13th-century Buddhist reformer Nichiren. Ikeda found Toda to be a man of conviction with a gift for explaining profound Buddhist concepts in logical, accessible terms. Challenging poverty and ill health, he continued his education under the tutelage of Toda, who became his mentor in life.

In May 1960, two years after Toda's death, Ikeda, then 32, succeeded him as president of the Soka Gakkai. He dedicated himself to encouraging the group's members in the process of personal transformation and societal contribution. Under his leadership, the movement began an era of innovation and expansion, fostering individuals committed to the promotion of peace, culture and education. In 1975, Ikeda became the first president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), now a global network linking some 12 million members in over 190 countries and territories.

Ikeda is founder of the Soka schools, a nondenominational school system based on the value-creating educational philosophy of Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944). The school system includes a university in Tokyo, Japan, and one in Aliso Viejo, California, U.S.A.

Ikeda is a prolific author of some 100 works which range from discourses on Buddhism to children's books, poetry and essays. He is also an avid photographer with a particular love of scenic landscapes and natural beauty. In recognition of his contributions as a peacebuilder and educator, Ikeda has been awarded around 300 academic honors from universities in more than 40 countries.

Ikeda has two sons, Hiromasa and Takahiro, and lives in Tokyo with his wife, Kaneko.



Photo by Daisaku Ikeda

A PROFILE OF DAISAKU IKEDA

BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHER
PEACEBUILDER
EDUCATOR



A GREAT HUMAN REVOLUTION
IN JUST A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL WILL HELP
ACHIEVE A CHANGE
IN THE DESTINY OF A NATION
AND, FURTHER, WILL ENABLE A CHANGE
IN THE DESTINY OF ALL HUMANKIND.

For more information:
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DAISAKU IKEDA

PRESIDENT OF SOKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL



- Buddhist philosopher, peacebuilder, educator and author
- President of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), an association of more than 12 million people practicing Nichiren Buddhism around the world
- Founder of
 - Institute of Oriental Philosophy
 - Soka education system
 - Min-On Concert Association
 - Tokyo Fuji Art Museum
 - Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue
 - Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research

“EMPOWERMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE AND FOR THE PEOPLE — INDIVIDUALS TAKING INITIATIVE TO REALIZE THEIR INFINITE POTENTIAL AS THEY CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY — IS THE BASIS FOR THE SGI MOVEMENT.”

BUDDHISM IN ACTION

Ikeda lectures and writes widely on ways of applying the practical wisdom of Mahayana Buddhism as a philosophy of empowerment and compassion in today's world. His commentaries on the teachings of the 13th-century Japanese priest Nichiren and the Lotus Sutra of Shakyamuni Buddha provide inspiration to SGI members worldwide.

- He has published many titles on Buddhism, including *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra* series, *The Living Buddha* and *Unlocking the Mysteries of Birth and Death*.
- He has engaged in interfaith dialogue with representatives of the world's religions in order to promote peace and address common challenges.
- In 1962, he founded the **Institute of Oriental Philosophy** dedicated to academic study of Buddhism and other world religions. It has branches in Japan, the U.K., Hong Kong, Russia and India.

“WHEN ORDINARY CITIZENS UNITE IN A COMMITMENT TO POSITIVE CHANGE, A CULTURE OF PEACE — A CENTURY OF LIFE — WILL COME INTO BEING.”

“PEACE IS NOT SOME ABSTRACT CONCEPT. IT IS A QUESTION OF HOW EACH ONE OF US PLANTS AND CULTIVATES THE SEEDS OF PEACE IN THE REALITY OF DAILY LIVING, IN THE DEPTHS OF OUR BEING.”

PEACE IN ACTION

For over 40 years, Ikeda has campaigned for the abolition of nuclear weapons that threaten humanity's collective right to live. He promotes a culture of peace where differences are treasured and in which dialogue and exchange create bridges that link people's hearts.

- Ikeda engaged in personal citizen diplomacy toward the normalization of Sino-Japanese relations from the 1960s onwards and created a web of cultural and educational exchange linking the two countries. He has also worked to rebuild friendships between Japan and its other Asian neighbors.
- Ikeda is a steadfast supporter of the ideals and potential of the United Nations and since 1983, he has authored a peace proposal every year offering possible solutions to global issues.
- He has taken the lead in SGI's grassroots activities promoting peace and disarmament, humanitarian relief, human rights and education for sustainability.
- He founded the **Min-On Concert Association** (1963) and the **Tokyo Fuji Art Museum** (1983) to deepen international understanding through music and cultural exchange.
- In 1993, he launched the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, later renamed the **Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue**, and in 1996, the **Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research**, which facilitates research on human security and global governance.

DIALOGUE IN ACTION

Dialogue, Ikeda asserts, reaffirms and reinvigorates our shared humanity.

- Aiming to build mutual understanding and seek solutions to the common problems facing humanity, Ikeda has met and engaged in dialogue with leading thinkers including Mikhail Gorbachev, economist J. K. Galbraith, peace activist Joseph Rotblat, futurist Hazel Henderson, environmentalist Wangari Maathai, champion of human rights Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and Indonesian Muslim leader Abdurrahman Wahid.
- Some 60 of Ikeda's dialogues have been published in book form. *Choose Life*, his dialogue with British historian Arnold Toynbee, with whom he first met in 1972, has been published in 28 languages.



Meeting Joseph Rotblat in Okinawa, Japan (Feb. 2000)

“President Ikeda is the champion of cultivating world peace through dialogue. Through dialogical encounters he has helped extend intellectual horizons and deepen critical self-reflectivity of dozens of thinkers of our time. His contribution to the life of the mind throughout the world is enormous.”

— Professor Tu Weiming
Harvard University

“FOR WHAT PURPOSE SHOULD ONE CULTIVATE WISDOM? MAY YOU ALWAYS ASK YOURSELF THIS QUESTION.”

EDUCATION IN ACTION

Ikeda believes that the task of education is to foster people of character who will contribute to building a just and peaceful world. He is also a firm believer in the importance of empowering young people.

- Ikeda has put into practice the philosophy of Soka or “value-creating” education of Soka Gakkai first president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), a student-centered approach based on a belief in the limitless potential of every individual.
- He has founded the **Soka education system**, with kindergartens in six countries, elementary to graduate level study in Japan and a liberal arts university in the U.S.A.
- He has delivered lectures on themes related to peace, Buddhism and the human condition at more than 30 universities and academies worldwide, including Harvard University, the University of Bologna, the University of Havana and Peking University.



At the Singapore Soka Kindergarten (Nov. 2000)