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.
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.

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.

Buddhism in Action

Ikeda has lectured and written 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 the academic study of Buddhism and other world religions. The Institute also helps preserve ancient Lotus Sutra texts and make them available to researchers and the public.

Peace in Action

For some 60 years, Ikeda has campaigned for the abolition of nuclear weapons, succeeding the work of his mentor Josei Toda (1900–58). He promotes a culture of peace where differences are treasured and dialogue and exchange create bridges that link people’s hearts.

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

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 70 of Ikeda’s dialogues have been published in book form. Choose Life, his dialogue with British historian Arnold Toynbee, whom he first met in 1972, has been published in 29 languages.

“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). This is a student-centered approach based on a belief in the limitless potential of every individual.

▫ He 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.

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

At the Singapore Soka Kindergarten (Nov. 2000)
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, tackling the underlying 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 their efforts toward 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), a global network linking some 12 million people in over 190 countries and territories who put Buddhist values into action to help create a peaceful world.

Ikeda is founder of the Soka education system, 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 writer who has authored over 250 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 over 380 academic honors from universities in more than 50 countries and territories.

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

For more information:
www.daisakuikeda.org