

“ 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. ”

(The Human Revolution, Vol. 1)

A PROFILE OF DAISAKU IKEDA

BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHER | PEACE THROUGH DIALOGUE



Moscow, May 1994 (Photo by Daisaku Ikeda)



DAISAKU IKEDA (1928–2023)

Daisaku Ikeda was a Buddhist philosopher, peacebuilder, educator, author and poet. He served as the third president of the Soka Gakkai, a global community-based Buddhist organization centered on respect for the dignity of life, and was the founding president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI). [The SGI is an international association of the Soka Gakkai and has been an NGO in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 1983.]

BUDDHISM in Action

“The essence of the teachings of Buddhism is simple: treasure each person.”

(*A Dialogue on Human Rights in the 21st Century*)

As the third president of the Soka Gakkai, Ikeda advanced activities promoting peace, culture and education based on the Buddhist philosophy of the dignity of life, developing the organization into a global movement. The Soka Gakkai aims to contribute to the happiness of all people and to lasting world peace. Its spiritual lineage traces back to the 13th-century Japanese priest Nichiren, whose teachings were based on the Lotus Sutra of Shakyamuni Buddha.

- ▶ Buddhism teaches that inner transformation enables people to realize their true human potential and genuine happiness. Ikeda’s concept of “human revolution” elucidates that such inner change is the key to the growth of both the individual and society. This theme is vividly portrayed in his multi-volume novels *The Human Revolution* and *The New Human Revolution*.
- ▶ Ikeda lectured and wrote extensively, applying the practical wisdom of Mahayana Buddhism to empower and encourage people. His commentaries on the teachings of Nichiren and the Lotus Sutra, including *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra* and *The Living Buddha—An Interpretive Biography*, communicate enduring Buddhist principles in a way that is accessible to contemporary readers.
- ▶ In 1962, Ikeda founded the **Institute of Oriental Philosophy** as an academic institution dedicated to the study of Eastern thought, particularly Buddhism. It also engages in interfaith exchange and dialogue.



Meeting Rosa Parks in Los Angeles, CA (Jan. 1993)

PEACE in Action

“Nothing is more precious than peace. Nothing brings more happiness. Peace is the most basic starting point for the advancement of humankind.”

(*The New Human Revolution*, Vol. 1)

Ikeda’s lifelong commitment to peace was rooted in his experiences as a teenager during World War II. His belief as a Buddhist in the preciousness of life, together with his conviction in the power of dialogue to transcend differences, became the driving force behind his diverse activities for peace.

- ▶ Ikeda engaged in dialogue with leading figures including British historian Arnold J. Toynbee, South African President Nelson Mandela, Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, environmentalist Wangari Maathai, nuclear disarmament advocate Joseph Rotblat, Brazilian journalist Austregésilo de Athayde and former Indonesian president and Islamic leader Abdurrahman Wahid.
- ▶ Amid the Cold War, Ikeda pursued people’s diplomacy to ease tensions between China and the Soviet Union. In 1974, he visited China and met Premier Zhou Enlai and later traveled to the Soviet Union for dialogue with Premier Alexey Kosygin, helping to serve as a bridge between the two nations. He also worked to promote the normalization of China-Japan relations.
- ▶ Ikeda steadfastly advocated for the abolition of nuclear weapons, carrying forward the vision of his mentor Josei Toda (1900–58). From 1983 to 2022, Ikeda issued 40 annual peace proposals, charting pathways for nuclear abolition and solutions to other global challenges.
- ▶ Ikeda founded the **Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue** in 1993 and the **Toda Peace Institute** in 1996, to advance initiatives for peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Daisaku Ikeda founded a number of institutions dedicated to peace, culture and education, including the **Institute of Oriental Philosophy**, **Min-On Concert Association**, the **Soka Schools system** (from kindergarten through university), **Tokyo Fuji Art Museum**, the **Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue**, and the **Toda Peace Institute**.

He dedicated his life to fostering a lasting culture of peace through dialogue and to deepening mutual understanding. Until his passing at the age of 95, he embodied a Buddhism of action, and his writings inspired millions of people around the world. His legacy lives on in the countless individuals empowered by his vision of personal transformation and contribution to society.

CULTURE in Action

“Culture is the polar opposite of the violence of war; I see culture and the arts as the expressions of the joy of life.”

(The New Human Revolution, Vol. 24)

Ikeda regarded culture and art as living expressions of the human spirit that bring people together. He often described this as the “poetic spirit”—an openness to life that awakens awareness of our interconnectedness with all things.

▶ Ikeda was a prolific writer whose works range from Buddhism to essays, poetry and children’s stories. Some 250 of his books have been translated into more than 50 languages overall.

▶ He was an avid amateur photographer with a particular knack for finding beauty and uniqueness in ordinary scenes. A series of his photographs has toured over 40 countries and territories in an exhibition titled “Dialogue with Nature.”

▶ The **Min-On Concert Association** was founded in 1963 to promote cultural exchanges between Japan and other countries and territories—more than 100 to date—bringing diverse musical and dance traditions to audiences worldwide.

▶ The **Tokyo Fuji Art Museum** opened in 1983 and houses a collection of some 30,000 artworks from various cultures and periods. It also collaborates with museums around the world to host exhibitions both in Japan and abroad.

EDUCATION in Action

“Knowledge alone cannot give rise to value. It is only when knowledge is guided by wisdom that value . . . is created.”

(“The University of the Twenty-first Century—Cradle of World Citizens”)

Ikeda called for a dynamic shift from the idea of education serving the needs of society to the idea of society serving the essential aims of education. His philosophy of education is rooted in the vision articulated by first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), who emphasized that the true purpose of education is the happiness of each child.

▶ Ikeda founded the **Soka (value-creation) Schools system**, which includes kindergartens in six countries, elementary through high schools in Brazil and Japan, an international school in Malaysia and universities in Japan and the United States.

▶ He also delivered lectures on themes related to peace, Buddhism and the human condition at more than 30 universities worldwide, including Harvard University, the University of Bologna, Peking University, Moscow State University and the University of Guadalajara.

▶ The **Soka Amazon Institute** was established in 1992 based on Ikeda’s environmental vision. Since its founding, it has promoted initiatives in environmental protection, reforestation, environmental education and research. ■



At the Singapore Soka Kindergarten (Nov. 2000)

LIFE and LEGACY

Daisaku Ikeda was born in Tokyo, Japan, on January 2, 1928, to a family of seaweed farmers. As a teenager, he lived through the devastation of World War II. His four older brothers were drafted into military service, and the eldest was killed in action. These experiences left an indelible mark and fueled his lifelong determination to work for peace and the happiness of people everywhere.

In 1947, at the age of 19, Ikeda met Josei Toda, educator and leader of the Soka Gakkai. Toda's conviction and ability to explain profound Buddhist concepts in clear, accessible terms deeply impressed him. Despite poverty and ill health, Ikeda pursued his education under Toda's tutelage, regarding him as his lifelong mentor.

In May 1960, at the age of 32, Ikeda succeeded second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, becoming the third president. He led the movement into an era of growth and innovation, encouraging members in their efforts toward personal transformation and social contribution. In 1975, he became the founding president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

In recognition of his contributions as a peacebuilder and educator, Ikeda received more than 400 academic honors from universities in over 50 countries and territories.

Ikeda passed away peacefully on November 15, 2023, at the age of 95, having devoted his life to spreading the humanistic ideals of Buddhism and promoting a lasting culture of peace through dialogue. ■



For more information:

www.daisakuikeda.org

