

Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Social Science, *honoris causa* A Citation



Daisaku Ikeda

Born in Tokyo on 2 January, 1928, into a family whose business was processing edible seaweed, Daisaku Ikeda completed his formal education with graduation from Tokyo's Fuji Junior College. His education continued under the influence of his *sensei* or mentor, the courageous Josei Toda, second president of Soka Gakkai, the lay Buddhist organization dedicated to the pursuit of humane values and peace on earth.

Since 1960, Dr. Ikeda, as third president of Soka Gakkai, has worked strenuously to spread its message, so that it is now the largest group of Buddhist lay believers in Japan, numbering about eight million Japanese families in its fellowship. In 1975, Dr. Ikeda became first president of Soka Gakkai International. He was inaugurated as honorary president of Soka Gakkai in 1979, a position he has held ever since. The membership has quickly spread abroad, too, having well over three million members in more than one hundred and sixty-three countries and regions worldwide, including of course, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Some of Dr. Ikeda's many eloquent speeches and addresses on the urgent and crucial need to negotiate peaceful means to resolve international confrontations have been collected in his two-volume *A Lasting Peace*. In this book, he goes to the heart of differences between the contemporary world of global interconnections of peoples and nations and the relative isolation and separateness of nations in the past, where travel and communications were much slower than they are now. At the same time, our technologies of mass destruction keep us forever living at the edge of the abyss of total destruction. He comes to the same insight as the poet W.H. Auden: "We must love one another or die."

Technology, of course, can also help us along the pathways of peace and improved lifestyles, for war is incubated not outside in the world or universe; it lurks inside us, like a beast about to spring. If we are to restrain this ferocious hound of war, we must undergo a change deep within our psyches. Human beings must embark on a perilous journey of fundamental change, so that we may discover the ways of harmony among ourselves. Dr. Ikeda knows that "To this end, we must concentrate the best of human knowledge and effort."

Convinced that education is crucial for the secure future of humanity, he founded Soka University, Soka Women's Junior College and a number of kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools. In addition, kindergartens were established in Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. In Orange County, California, the Aliso Viejo Campus of Soka University of America (SUA) will be opened officially on 3 May, 2001. Furthermore, Dr. Ikeda has founded the Min-on Concert Association, the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy.



His travels to more than fifty countries have taken him all over the world to acquire first hand knowledge of many cultures; his talks with influential political leaders, religious leaders, and academics have helped shape his and others' influential views on world problems; and his eloquent writings, translated into the major European languages, as well as Chinese, Korean, Thai, Indonesian, and Malay, have spread his words of peace, wisdom, and compassion. His meeting with one of these prominent people led to a crucial book, *Choose Life, A Dialogue, Arnold Toynbee and Daisaku Ikeda*. It is a record of their questionings and conversations over the period 1971 to 1974. Their exchanges of ideas deal with a host of problems and issues, some of them traditional questions in most cultures, such as the mind-body relationship and the relation of life on earth to the life force in the universe, together with other topics arising from modern conditions: pollution of our environment, organ transplants, and the exploration of space. The book is remarkable for its effort to understand differences, to discuss issues from different and often compatible cultural standpoints, and to reach agreement, the whole informed by good will and broad humanistic learning.

Dr. Ikeda has emerged as a prolific inspirational writer and poet, using his Buddhist faith and thought to explore problems in contemporary life around the globe. Hand in glove with his prolific writing and tireless other work in the cause of world peace goes the belief expressed in the epigram to his *Symphonic Poems With Nature*: "Poetry is the heart that binds together human beings, society and the universe." He has here the rationale for a similar insight by the great contemporary French poet, Yves Bonnefoy, who told an interviewer that "Poetry can save the world."

In *Symphonic Poems*, a lavish collection of his poetry with photographs of matching sensitivity as well as fine technical accomplishment, Ikeda assumes many voices. Even the weeds growing on the windy dunes of Shizuoka's shores are given an urgent voice, making them sturdy, unpretentious witnesses to life's great force. He speaks in his poem "Autumn" with the voice of one who, as a child growing to adolescence, witnessing the horror of war and militarism, turned away from violence and hatred:

*In the midst of the net of good and evil
the inmost thoughts of the poet remain pure.*

Yet he is *not* unrealistic. He knows we are all caught in that net. Art can bind us also, but bind us together as sentient human beings, appreciative of creative thought and feeling, because art's foundation is our common humanity. Art, he writes, thus forms "a rainbow bridge linking together all humankind." The cultural exchange that great art offers us is now crucial to our survival, for art is a way of knowing.

In his annual peace proposal released in January 2000, "Peace Through Dialogue: A Time to Talk – Thoughts on a Culture of Peace," Dr. Ikeda proposed an international conflict resolution committee within the United Nations to propagate international humanitarian



law in regions suffering from conflicts. It is wholly in accord with Ikeda's thinking that the United Nations has declared the year 2001 the "Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations."

Dr. Ikeda outlines his seminal ideas in the addresses he has given in many universities and collected in his book, *A New Humanism*. In "The Magnificent Cosmos", delivered in 1994 at Moscow Lomonosov State University, he stresses the inner power that derives from honestly examining the self. We must listen to the rhythm of change that is within us to discover "the humility and generosity of spirit that have been at the core of ethical behaviour since ancient times." It is with this firm belief that Dr Ikeda devotes himself to the education and nurture of young people, working from a strong base, his inspirational concept of revolution from within oneself, encouraging people to become self-reliant individuals, as they advance into the twenty-first century.

Dr. Ikeda's lifelong dedication to human understanding, education, the spread of peace, and the promotion of happiness of spirit have been recognized officially by many awards. He holds honorary doctorates from over fifty universities and is an honorary citizen of more than one hundred and forty cities worldwide, besides having had honorary professorships in some forty universities. Apart from his Humanitarian Award of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Peace Award, he has been recognized for his poetry by gaining the Kenya Oral Literature Association Award and the Poet Laureate Award of the Association of World Poets.

From Moscow to Harvard, Peking to Buenos Aires, Shenzhen to the Institut de France, he has spoken at universities around the world, and forged strong links with them. Our own university and Soka University have had ties since 1975. For over a quarter of a century now we have engaged in extensive academic exchanges, including the exchange of undergraduates. Dr Ikeda was here in 1992 as Distinguished Visiting Professor and more recently in February 2000 for detailed exchange of views. Our current Vice-Chancellor, Professor Arthur Li, and his predecessor, Professor Charles Kao, have had Honorary Doctorates conferred on them by Soka University.

Daisaku Ikeda serves humankind, spreading life-serving values through education and art in order to nurture men and women of good will, in the pursuit of global peace.

*I have heard men cry,
Hatred's venom on their tongues.
But with his heart-felt
words, Ikeda's poetry
turns us from the paths of blood.*

For these reasons, it is my great privilege, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, to ask that you confer on President Daisaku Ikeda the degree of Doctor of Social Science, *honoris causa*.