

## The Relevant Intellectual

### Citation on Daisaku Ikeda

Hon. Professor, San Marcos; Beijing; Fudan; Santo Domingo and Wuhan. Doctorates (*honoris Causa*) Moscow State, Sofia; Soka; Buenos Aires; Guanajuato.

Daisaku Ikeda was born a Japanese in Tokyo on the 2nd January, 1928 and is a graduate of Fuji Junior College in Japan. However, in his life Ikeda has shown that he is a man too large for any one geopolitical nation and has become an eminent renown world personality. He has achieved this status as a result of his very unique concerns for humanity; his ideal, clear vision for mankind's future; his selfless commitment to the course of achieving that vision, and his subsequent contribution to the improvement of humanity in Japan as well as the rest of the world.

That Ikeda has made profound contributions in his life, and will stand out as one of the greatest individuals of the Twentieth Century can be seen from the recognition he has already received in many areas of life from all over the world: This is a man who has been given honorary citizenship in no less than sixty-two cities and states in eight countries; This is a man who holds five honorary doctorates from five different world famous universities including Moscow State University and the University of Sofia in Bulgaria; This is a man who holds five honorary professorships from various universities and; This is a man who holds, as of 1990, fifteen national and international awards and honours.

Daisaku Ikeda has worked from a solid base of Nichiren Sochu Buddhism to which he got converted in 1947 and the Soka Gakkai, an organization of Buddhist lay believers which he joined in the same year, and became a very close disciple of its then President Josei Toda. Ikeda excelled to become the third President of Soka Gakkai from 1960 to 1979 after which he remained the organization's Hon President to date. During his presidency, this organization grew to become the largest organization of its kind in Japan with its current membership of 7.9 million households. As President of Soka Gakkai, Ikeda went further and in 1975 founded the Soka Gakkai International which is an umbrella organization for Nichiren Sochu Buddhism followers worldwide. Ikeda was to be the first president of this organization, a post he still holds. Under his committed and active leadership both the Soka Gakkai and the Soka Gakkai International were recognised and registered as non-governmental organizations with various United Nations departments and bodies, thus affording them opportunity to participate in United Nations and therefore world activities of various kinds.

Daisaku Ikeda has lived a life dedicated to the promotion of peace, culture, and education. The peace which Ikeda has done so much to promote is not just the absence of war; he has worked for a "human revolution": Having observed that the 19th and 20th Centuries have been characterized by overdependence on rationalism, pragmatism and practical politics, Ikeda has taken every opportunity, and used every facility available to him to advocate and propagate the need for the improvement of society that starts from within the individual. In one of his many proposals for peace delivered at the 35th General Meeting of Soka Gakkai in 1972 he said '..... the individual requires a firm basis enabling him to advance with strength of his beliefs, even when he is completely alone.' The peace that Ikeda has challenged the world and mankind to work for starts with 'stabilizing one's inner thoughts and philosophy'.

Daisaku Ikeda's contribution to world peace emanates from the Buddhist convictions that there is in human life the inherent ability to find creative resolutions for conflicts and to create value in the process. His philosophy for life sees culture as a barometer for peace in the individual and society - he sees culture as both the expression and the fortification of the power of life in human beings with its unique ability to create meaning and values in life activities. Within this mode of thought a system of education is required which is focussed on the enhancement of the ability of the individual and society to create value. Education is therefore a key issue in the establishment of peace

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that starts with the individual in Ikeda's philosophy.

Daisaku Ikeda is thus a philosopher who has concerned himself with serious issues which threaten the human society and mankind in his time. Apart from his three major concerns of peace, culture and education, Ikeda has tackled issues like nuclear disarmament and environmental destruction, the East-West and North-South polarization and the cold war, cultural pluralism, global unity of mankind, women and gender issues in development and the youth as the most critical investment for the future of mankind. As a philosopher in fact, Ikeda has provided the world with a model for the establishment of peace. It is a model calling for the Second Renaissance. Based on Buddhism, the model starts with individual human spiritual renewal that gives religious faith deep in the human heart to provide the necessary guidance and control.

In this, Ikeda seeks to improve on today's disparity between mankind's technological advancement and his ethical retardation. The model requires the individual to be happily nestled in a society with an established culture that is accepted and acceptable to provide everyone with all they need to know, on how to behave well and judge good from bad. In the model, education must be designed to equip the individual with what he needs to play his role effectively. In the model, the individual so prepared transforms his own life from within, then proceeds as an ordinary human being to play a leading role, in the battle to achieve permanent World Peace.

Though a philosopher, Daisaku Ikeda has not remained a dreamer - he has distinguished himself as a practical man who has taken the challenge of his ideas and given exemplary lead in pursuing them. Practically he has done a great deal to put his model to test in his own actions; he has lived demonstrating how each of us can - and must! - make our own commitment to World Peace, and that our commitment makes a difference.

First, Ikeda has sought out world sages and drawn them out in dialogue on the critical issues and his ideas on them. In his quest for lasting world peace, he has met with leading political, cultural, and educational figures throughout the world. He has dialogued with more than 33 such leaders often more than once. This list includes premiers, and presidents of nations, U.N. secretary generals and world intellectuals and thinkers.

Second, to promote education, Daisaku Ikeda has built many institutions of learning: He founded the Soka University in 1971 under the mottoes: 'Be the Seat for Humanistic Education, Be the Cradle of a New Culture and Be the Fortress of Peace for Mankind.' Under his guidance and inspiration, this university has purposefully developed with affiliated institutions and programmes that further Ikeda's ideals for mankind. He has



*Dr Daisaku Ikeda, President of Soka Gakkai International wearing a University of Nairobi academic gown.*

started more than five high schools to do the same in preparing the youth. The Gakkai itself has an education division actively involved in educational matters, such as exhibitions and donation of books to schools in isolated and outlying regions of Japan; and even counseling of children. For educational purposes, Daisaku Ikeda has founded no less than eleven institutions that include The Institute of Oriental Philosophy in Tokyo and The Fuji Art Museum in Fujinomiye.

Third, for culture, the education programmes have been made to address and contain a cultural component. Through Daisaku Ikeda's inspiration the theme in the Soka Gakkai's activities is that cultural and artistic exchanges can play an invaluable role in forging bonds of trust and understanding that transcend differences of nations and race. Practically, this theme has been supported by youth culture festivals held annually since the first one was held in Chicago in 1981. In 1963 Daisaku Ikeda founded the Min-On Concert Association in Tokyo as part of Soka Gakkai's programme to promote culture. This association of more than 1,500,000 members, has sponsored more than 1,500 paid concerts, and more than 1,000 regular public performances annually.

Fourth, Daisaku Ikeda's whole life activities have been to promote peace. All the dialogues he has held have been for peace. These have been written, published and translated into very many languages to reach and influence more people. His dialogues *Choose life, A Dialogue with Arnold Toynbee*, a renowned British historian, is currently a textbook for sociology departments at universities in the whole world. He has personally given lectures and seminars on peace, as it relates to various sections of society such as youth or women; He has used exhibitions to convey information relating to issues of peace and

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development. Some of these exhibitions such as the ones on "Nuclear Arms: Threat to our World" and "War and Peace" have become world features that have been shown in more than twenty-five (25) major cities of the world. Daisaku Ikeda has over the years written over sixteen international proposals for disarmament and peace, and other international problems. Some of these are The Proposals for Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship; In support of the U.N. and the Abolition of Nuclear weapons; Ten-Point Proposal for Disarmament; and Toward A New Globalism.

Fifth, Daisaku Ikeda is a literary giant. From childhood Ikeda "raised himself on the literary masterpieces of the world, making the timeless and universal wisdom and principles contained in the world's best literature his own." Ikeda is an author whose philosophy and ideas have found expression in literary works. His literary interests range from critical discussions of great works of the past in Chinese, Japanese, and Western literary traditions to autobiography, diaries, poetry and essays on topics of pressing issues of today. These works have been multiplied as they have been translated into many languages. One of his works "Life: An Enigma, A Precious Jewel" has just been translated into Kiswahili, Kenya's National Language. This brings home to us the precious ideas of a man who has set for himself the goal to change the world; indeed a man who has already effected changes in the world. Ikeda's literary contribution has been recognised internationally, having been named Poet Laureate by the World Academy of Arts and Culture in 1981, and presented with the Kenya Oral Literature Association (KOLA) Award in 1986.

Six, Daisaku Ikeda is an avid photographer. His volumes of published photographs under the title "*Rendezvous with Na-*

*ture*" is a testimony not just to a gifted artist but even more fundamentally, to a skillful thinker able to appreciate nature so much because he is deeply at peace with nature and with himself - a performer with faith in his art.

Reading through Daisaku Ikeda's published works whether proposals, dialogues, fiction or biographies, gives a refreshing feeling of a breeze through a window for mankind's survival. It is reading the words and messages of an intellectual who is very simple because he is so profound. These are quiet words of a natural genius spending his life away infecting the world with seeds of a quiet revolution. Reading Daisaku Ikeda's curriculum vitae is a humbling experience for a schooled academic.

Daisaku Ikeda is a man difficult to summarize: He is a philosopher cum sociologist *per excellence*; he is a practical man of ceaseless energy; He is an educator, an author, a poet, and a literary critic; He is a man committed to advancing peace in the world peace which is based on those qualities that mankind most require to survive; He is a man of great convictions on matters as religious as they are human. This man must surely be *the relevant intellectual* who has discovered with Rudyard Kipling that "Words are the most powerful drug used by mankind". His published works, both fiction and non-fiction, poetry and prose, are literally innumerable. Daisaku Ikeda is a remarkable man of purpose, a first class intellectual, an international sage, who has recognised, and offered the world his gift of letters in a rationalized and determined attempt to live to leave the world a better place than he found it. To give Daisaku Ikeda an Honorary Doctorate of Letters is simply to give recognition to a man already acknowledged in his own lifetime. This is why it is such a great honour for the University of Nairobi today to add to the glowing international tribute to Ikeda by conferring on him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters.

*The Vice-Chancellor Prof F.J. Gichaga address a congregation convened to award the Honorary Doctorate of Letters to SGI President Dr Daisaku Ikeda. Behind is the full Orchestra of Soka University.*

