

Dr Daisaku Ikeda

The degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*) was conferred upon Dr Daisaku Ikeda, educator, poet, philosopher and champion of peace, by the Chancellor Emeritus Professor Dame Leonie Kramer AC at a special graduation ceremony held in Singapore on 24 November 2000.



Dr Daisaku Ikeda, photo, 'The University of Sydney News', 30 November 2000, University of Sydney Archives.

Citation

Chancellor I have the honour to present to you Daisaku Ikeda for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*).

Daisaku Ikeda was born in Tokyo on January 2nd 1928, the fifth of eight children to a family of seaweed farmers. He lived through the devastation of the Second World War. His witness of that horror and of the misery which followed influenced his goal to enable all peoples to cross religious, philosophical and national boundaries in order to work for human understanding and for peace. In his book *Choose Life* which he wrote with the late Arnold Toynbee, the two authors express their faith in the discourse between people of widely different backgrounds to find solutions to intractable problems.

Daisaku Ikeda's Buddhist faith has provided the foundations of his work as an educator, poet and philosopher. As a young man he came under the influence of Josei Toda the second president of the Soka Gakkai, a lay Buddhist society whose activities are based on the philosophy of the 13th century Buddhist teacher and reformer Nichiren. Toda taught the youthful Ikeda how Soka Gakkai's philosophy could become a means of realizing the universal values of dignity and peace. In May 1960, two years after Toda's death, Ikeda succeeded him as president of the Soka Gakkai. President Ikeda also acknowledges the influence of his wife Kaneko who for almost fifty years has been his constant companion in their promotion of dialogues for peace.

From a country and culture which had been isolated it would have been easy for Daisaku Ikeda to have been concerned only with Japanese issues and with the success of the Soka Gakkai movement. But he is an internationalist. He became President of Soka Gakkai International in 1975 and has been given the honorary citizenship of over 90 cities. Within Japan he has created the Soka school system based on respect for human dignity, for the environment and for diverse cultures and traditions.

Soka University, founded in 1971, enjoys exchange agreements with fifty institutions of higher learning worldwide. Daisaku Ikeda has also founded peace and cultural institutions including the Boston Research Centre for the study of peace in the 21st century, the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum and the Hawaii based Toda

Research Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research. That unique Institute has fostered dialogue around the world on issues such as food security, nuclear disarmament, globalization and full employment and communication between civilizations. The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney has greatly benefited from the intellectual challenge and the collegial support of the Toda Institute.

In his leadership of Sokka Gakkai international and in his writings about human fulfillment Daisaku Ikeda has shown the significance of the visual arts, the performing arts and poetry. In addition to his work with Arnold Toynbee, other joint books have included *Lifelong Quest for Peace* with Nobel Prize winner Linus Pauling, *Human Values in a Changing World* with Bryan Wilson and *Choose Peace* with the Norwegian scholar Johann Galtung. In these and many other books and pamphlets he explains profound Buddhist concepts in inspiring and accessible terms. Each year for the past seventeen years he has published a peace proposal which explores the interrelation between core Buddhist concepts and the challenges which global society faces in the struggle to realize nuclear disarmament and human security.

In a life which has been given wide international acclaim it would be easy to overlook Daisaku Ikeda's promotion of other people's interests. His insight into the human condition is apparent in his humour, in his photography, in his poetry and in face to face communication. He has associated with Presidents and Princes but still makes a deep commitment to ordinary citizens, to school children and to students from all parts of the globe.

His promotion of international dialogue and his own Sokka Gakkai's fostering of international friendship are a gift to humanity. He is a unique world citizen. We are honoured to have him become a graduate of the University of Sydney.

Chancellor I present to you President Daisaku Ikeda for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.