INTRODUCTION

1. The Life Work of Daisaku Ikeda: Peace Through Education

The life work of Daisaku Ikeda rivals the feats of many of the twentieth century Nobel Prize winners.

Several of the laureates of the 1990s have been recognized for their achievements in volatile regions of the world: Kim Dae Jung for his work for human rights and democracy South Korea; John Hume and David Trimble for their efforts in Northern Ireland; and Yassar Arafat, Shimon Peres, and Yitzhak Rabin in the Middle East. Daisaku Ikeda has used the power of education to promote peace in the most volatile area of all: the human soul.

The six peace and cultural institutions, 1,000 cultural centers, and 13 educational institutions (kindergartens, elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, and universities) he has founded in Japan and abroad are deeply entrenched in the philosophy of peace through education. The motto of Soka University of Japan is:

Be the Highest Seat of Learning for Humanity
Be the Cradle of a New Culture
Be a Fortress for the Peace of Humankind

As president of Soka Gakkai International, a global association of over 12 million lay Buddhists worldwide, Daisaku Ikeda promotes a philosophy based on respect and peaceful co-existence. Under his leadership, membership in Soka Gakkei has risen from 750,000 to over 12 million. The peace that Ikeda advocates is not simply a peace between people, but a comprehensive peace including inner peace and peace with the environment. Like Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela, Daisaku Ikeda fights oppression. For Ikeda, the enlightenment and liberation of the human soul is a prerequisite for eliminating oppression and building a peaceful world community in which all people can flourish.

In some sense, Ikeda is doing the same kind of work on the spiritual level that the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Jody Williams (1997) did out in the field: instead of banning and clearing of anti-personnel mines, Ikeda has devoted his life work to clearing the “inner” land mines preventing humanity from achieving peaceful co-existence. In the same way the Red Cross, UNICEF, and Amnesty International seek to mitigate physical suffering, Ikeda seeks to end the spiritual suffering, which he believes is the basis for social ills. He calls for a human revolution in each person. Whereas Doctors Without Borders provide medical care to people regardless of their national affiliation, Daisaku Ikeda offers spiritual medicine to people
so that the borders and barriers between human beings can be erased and an unprecedented era of human spirituality can occur.

Like Linus Pauling, Daisaku Ikeda has fought ferociously against nuclear weapons. As an absolute pacifist, Ikeda has vigorously campaigned the United Nations for the past thirty years for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Each year his treatise against nuclear weapons is read into the minutes at the United Nations.

Nobel prize winners such as Jane Addams (International President of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom) and Baroness Bertha Sophie Felicita Von Suttner (President of Permanent International Peace Bureau) worked tirelessly for their vision of global peace. Ikeda has worked as indefatigably toward the same goal by elevating dialogue to a global level. Since the early 1970s, Daisaku Ikeda has convened dozens of dialogues of peace with artists, politicians, scholars, social activists, poets, sculptors, musicians, photographers, and museum directors from around the world. A short list includes: Henry Kissinger, André Malraux, John Kenneth Galbraith, Zhou Enali, John Major, Margaret Thatcher, Jiang Zemin, Kocheril Roman, Aleksei Kosygin, Fidel Castro, Lech Walesa, and Rosa Parks, and Nobel Prize winners such as Linus Pauling, Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Mikhail A. Sholokhov. Like Socrates in the agora (marketplace) of ancient Athens, Daisaku Ikeda searches for truth by dialoguing with the most intelligent and most influential people of his era.

In one way or another, every one of Dr. Ikeda’s 125 books deals with peace, whether it is his children’s stories or books featuring his world-class photography. Ikeda’s diverse writings, which have been translated into over 20 languages, have reached a wide audience. His philosophical writings, essays, dialogues and addresses discuss art, peace, education, world hunger, spirituality, capital punishment, and numerous other topics. His poetry and novels have struck a spark in the literary world, so much so that the World Academy of Arts and Cultures named him its poet laureate in 1981. His children’s books promote peace, love, and hope. Ikeda has successfully communicated his message of peace to an international, interfaith, and intergenerational audience.

2. The Burden of Introduction

A tremendous burden is put upon me: I am responsible for introducing the educational philosophy of Daisaku Ikeda to the Western world.

First and foremost, Buddhism pervades the thinking of Daisaku Ikeda. To understand why Ikeda advocates world peace, we must examine his Buddhist philosophy. Trying to understand Ikeda without understanding Buddhism is like trying to understand buildings without understanding architecture. For example, his idea of globalism is born from the Buddhist belief in the interconnectedness of all life.
Integrated into Ikeda’s Buddhism are the educational theories of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, first president of the Soka Gakkai (Society of Value Creators). Value-creating is fundamental to this philosophy of education; the more positive values brought into the world, the greater the meaning of life.

The full scope of the educational philosophy of Daisaku Ikeda is not expounded in any one definitive text. The task for the scholar is to reassemble Ikeda’s insights into a streamlined whole. Ikeda’s philosophy cannot be poured from the jar right into a pan. Nor is his philosophy fragmented, disparate ingredients to which other ingredients must be added. The basics of his educational philosophy are all there, but have to be seasoned slightly for their full flavor to emerge. My job as a scholar-cook is to season the wisdom just right to allow aromatic juices to blend.

3. Organization of the Book

To ensure fluidity, the text is divided into thirty-five short chapters. By design, chapters read like short essays. In theory, each one of these chapters can be detached from the text and can become the focus of a discussion or the theme of a class.

The book is divided into four major sections. In Part One, Ikeda’s Buddhist beliefs are explored. Daisaku Ikeda is greatly influenced by the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, a 13th century Japanese priest who believed that all living beings have the potential to reach enlightenment. Another huge influence is Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first president of Soka Gakkai and one of the most controversial educational theorists in Japan in the early twentieth century. The first section of book also includes analyses of the five kinds of eyes, ten states of being, three thousand realms in a single moment of life (ichinen sanzen), three realms and ten factors, the causality of karma, the greater and lesser self, kōsen-rufu, value-creation, and enlightenment.

In Part Two, the major principles of Ikeda’s philosophy of education are enumerated. They consist of inner revolution, cosmic citizenship, peaceful competition, completeness-incompleteness, philosophically based education, self-mastery, hope as a moral virtue, trust and harmony, faith and ultimate meaning, and the superrational.

The third part brings Ikeda into imaginary dialogues with some of the most influential thinkers on education, including Lao Tzu, Plato, Mill, Whitehead, Dewey, Gramsci, King, Freire, and Gardner. This will allow the reader to see how Ikeda’s thinking on education intersects with some of the more influential ideas of philosophy of education. Part III and Part IV extend Ikeda’s philosophy of education. “Meeting Today’s Educational Challenges on Ikeda’s Terms,” the final section, discusses how Ikeda’s philosophy of education—especially inner revolution—can counteract violence, low self-esteem, reductionism and compartmentalization, nihilism and apathy, and intolerance.
4. The Search for Wisdom: Spirituality in Education

How can Daisaku Ikeda’s philosophy of education be of service to educators around the world?

One of the biggest perversions is the belief that spirituality has no place in education. Education prepares students for their careers and for becoming good citizens, while religion works on the spiritual aspect of the person. Education offers knowledge, religion wisdom. Teachers give technical not spiritual advice. This division is typical in a world full of divisions.

The search for wisdom is the search for spirituality. Spirituality is the act of searching for truth, beauty, goodness, and the ultimate source of what is. The objects of spirituality can be called wisdom.

Exiling spirituality from education means exiling wisdom. From the standpoint of today’s spiritual aridity, that makes little sense. In education, spirituality is sometimes seen as the frosting on the cake. It makes the cake tastier, but isn’t essential. Wisdom is treated as an accessory, much like a compact disc player in a car.

Functional education produces knowledgeable people. It does not cultivate wise people. Educational systems that produce students who merely function in an economic system create dysfunctional citizens. If we want people to become “better citizens,” don’t we mean that they should be tolerant and respectful of others, be willing to dialogue with others in order to work out differences, and be interested in the interconnectedness of states of affairs?

“Good citizenship” hinges on meeting each other as spiritual beings. For in our spirituality, our ideals and ultimately our greatness reside. The act of spirituality upgrades the human spirit, changing focus from the petty to the profound, from a self-serving limited scope to a community-focused far-sightedness. When we do not meet each other as spiritual beings, we meet as animals staking out our territories.

The largest religion in the world is Consumerism. Advertising spreads the gospel of Consumerism around the planet with remarkable speed. Commercials and commercialized programming are our children’s teachers. Commercials, the new oracles of Delphi, deluge young minds with appeals to the baser instincts and foster materialistic dreams. Where is the true wisdom to counteract this “false” wisdom? Can a wisdom-based education be this counteracting force?

A wisdom-based education leads to the question that all generations must face: What is it to be human? How we answer that question determines our life philosophy, our morals, and the way we educate persons.

For the past fifty years Daisaku Ikeda has sought to answer that question. His work is more than the sum total of universities, high schools, grade school, cultural centers he has founded. His work is more than the sum total of the dozens of books that he has published. His work answers the question of
“What does it mean to be human?” with the answer: “To live peacefully with yourself, other people, and all beings in the universe.”

5. Soka Education

In *Soka Education: A Buddhist Vision for Teachers, Students and Parents*, Ikeda identifies the fundamental questions guiding the core curriculum of Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo, California, the most recent university he has founded:

- What is the individual human life?
- What is the relationship between the individual and the physical environment in which we live?
- What is the relationship between the individual and human environment in which we live?
- What are the global issues in peace, culture and education?

These guiding questions will be addressed from historical, multicultural, analytic, and experiential perspectives. More than offering a liberal arts education, Soka University of America distinguishes itself from many institutions in the following areas: creativity, value creation, happiness wisdom, egalitarianism, and Socratic dialogue.

“Creativity,” Ikeda writes, “could be called the badge or proof of our humanity. Human beings are the only creatures capable of striving positively and dynamically, day after day, to create newer, higher, values.” Value-creating education helps people to produce benefits and remove harms, cultivate good and avoid evil, and to create beauty and repel the ugly. The object of value-creating education is happiness. The world desperately needs an age of wisdom because information and knowledge don’t necessarily produce happiness.

An egalitarian and Socratic ethos should guide educational practices. As Ikeda says of faculty at Soka University of America: “They must respect and treasure the students as comrades and equals.” An egalitarian environment is well suited for open dialogue. Unless education is grounded in open dialogue, then “parochial perspectives and the passions” will reign.

This humanistic, life-affirming educational philosophy implies much beyond its guiding principles. It implies concern for distant peoples and distant times. It implies a vision beyond global unity—it implies a cosmic unity. It implies new ways to assess wisdom, especially as it relates to the ten states of being.

More than explain the principles of Ikeda’s educational philosophy, this book will discuss their implications. Ignoring their implications would mean harvesting a fecund intellectual crop without seeing what by-products could be extracted—certainly not in the spirit of value-creating education.