

**ANTHOLOGY OF PEACE
SHINES LIGHT ON THE POSSIBILITIES
COMMENTARY ON 'FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE'
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For the Sake of Peace is a new collection of writings by Daisaku Ikeda. The work of this prodigious Buddhist author runs the gamut from poetry (his poetic tribute to Walt Whitman is a must-read for all lovers of this great American poet) to wondrous children's stories that edify as they excite the imagination. Although Ikeda is not well-known to English language readers, among those who have read him (or who have been privileged to hear his occasional American lectures), he is recognized for his views on global citizenship, culture and diversity, human rights, "soft" power as a tool of international diplomacy and environmental degradation.

All of these subjects are touched upon in *For the Sake of Peace*, each leading irresistibly — as Ikeda's arguments unfold — toward one overriding, unshakable concern: the centrality of peace to the human condition. Peace is not just the absence of armed clashes between nations; rather, it is a manifestation of the life condition of individual human beings. Throughout the book, Ikeda associates peace in the broadest sense with the ability of individuals to actualize peace in their own lives.

Peace Begins with Self-mastery

This important and compelling book is about the conditions of peace — how to think about peace, how to develop a culture of peace and how to make peace a part of the ultimate reality of every human being. In one of the most brilliant chapters of the book, Ikeda explains how peace begins with "self-mastery." It is difficult to read his discussion of self-mastery without thinking of that noble phrase that rolls off the American tongue from centuries of usage — self-government. Ikeda's discussion of self-mastery is about self-government at its best, drawing the conclusion that a nation cannot be truly self-governing if the individuals that compose it are not self-governing.

This is an important chapter for every democrat. His discussion of democracy is a reminder of the time before the triumph of the democratic age when thoughtful men worked hard to nurture democracy while at the same time correcting its vices. Noting Plato's critique of democracy — noting it perhaps more than would make most democrats comfortable — Ikeda proposes self-mastery as the solution to democracy's central problem, the lack of self-control.

Self-mastery starts with gaining control over anger and other tendencies that cause us to tyrannize and make war on ourselves, hence, on others. The first and most important step in self-mastery is victory over the ego — victory over the liberated self that, detached from any higher understanding of humanity, seeks unlimited gratification.

Self-mastery also means distinguishing between things that are transitory and things that are of permanent value, thereby checking the two sources of greed, unrestrained appetite and the desire to acquire. Self-restraint flows from self-mastery, Ikeda argues, establishing a government within that subjects passion to reason and war to peace. Drawing on Plato and other great Western thinkers, he weaves them into a tapestry on cloth supplied by his Buddhist faith. Speaking of the "path of self-mastery," Ikeda refers to this as a "human revolution," motivated and sustained by spiritual values.

Self-mastery means abandoning aggression for living in harmony with oneself, with others of our species and with nature. The human revolution, by preparing human beings to achieve the promise of their nature, turns good men into good citizens, making for a sound and healthy democracy. That which causes peace within the individual is the source of “good citizens of the world.” Ikeda’s thought places him firmly within the grand tradition of Western political philosophy that draws the good society from the wellspring of human nature.

An Advocate of Global Society

Building on that tradition, Ikeda makes his own, special contribution to this 2,000-year-old history. The Greek philosopher Aristotle championed the polis, or city-state as a condition necessary to leading a virtuous life. In his scheme, the life dedicated to virtue does not make for a society dedicated to peace. Aristotle assumed that all other states, small or large, driven by jealousy, would be at war with the virtuous city. John Locke, the seventeenth-century English philosopher, envisioned the cultivation of property, the basis of freedom, as taking place within the nation-state. Once men form a civil society, according to his argument, they agree to live under articles of peace that protect life and property. Locke, however, makes no provision for peace between nation-states, thus leaving them in a permanent state of war with one another. By contrast to Aristotle and Locke, Ikeda argues for a global society because he believes that peace is man’s greatest need.

Ikeda is critical of the worldview associated with Locke because it encourages unchecked appetite, destroying the very freedom that gives rise to it. From Ikeda’s point of view, the modern capitalist state (and, I would add, the socialist state) lacks self-control, a concept that approximates Aristotle’s notion of virtue. Rejecting the worldview associated with Locke, he also rejects the worldview associated with Aristotle. According to Aristotle, virtue is necessarily the possession of the few. By contrast, Ikeda contends that the virtues of Buddhahood are a potential of all men. For Ikeda, beyond the city-state and the nation-state lies a better global society. Global society allows Ikeda to appropriate a form of Aristotelean virtue, putting self-mastery within reach of all men. It also allows him to appropriate a form of Lockean prosperity by adopting a broader understanding of freedom, one that is rooted in community and culture. In this way, Ikeda uses Locke, the author of the Liberal state, to reach beyond Liberal or Lockean notions.

Locke, the first political philosopher to make the distinction between state and society, creates the possibility of a sphere of freedom and creativity for men separate from the direction of government and law. Continental philosophers, such as Jean Jacques Rousseau and Alexis de Tocqueville, deepen and give further meaning to this distinction through the discussion of custom and culture. Ikeda, well aware of these schools of thought, is also steeped in knowledge of the world’s great religions that long before the advent of modern political philosophy focused on the quality of life separate from any association with government or regime. Ikeda’s political philosophy, drawing on the Western philosophic tradition and Buddhist thought, fully develops this notion of society as man’s natural home, leading the way to a discussion of justice separate from government or classical regime theory.

As far as I can tell, Ikeda does not argue for a world state or government, a fashion of the last century. His basic mistrust of politics and politicians causes him to stop short of this. Nor does he argue for a classless, stateless society, as was another twentieth century fashion. Moreover, Ikeda is neither “right” nor “left,” rather; he has developed a political philosophy that is firmly rooted in people sans ideological gloss. While liberals speak of the rights of individuals, Ikeda focuses on the individual himself, viewing his rights through the lens of culture, community

and need. While conservatives speak of the distinction between freedom and tyranny, Ikeda looks behind and beyond this distinction to how people, regardless of regime, must live their lives. Americans speak of man's natural rights, whereas Ikeda speaks of human rights — a distinction not just of degree, but also of kind, the former a “self-evident” truth, fixed and “inalienable,” while the latter is the product of culture and thus variable. This said, Ikeda is not a relativist, cultural or otherwise. Cultural relativism, he argues, is a passive approach to peace, ultimately undermining it.

Ikeda is an advocate of global society, not necessarily of globalization. His emphasis is on people and culture, not the exchange of technology and capital investment. Technology has made for a shrinking world. The destruction of multitudes in the wars of the last century established a yearning in people for peace that, through technology among other things, allows people to reach out to one another regardless of culture, age, race, ethnicity or gender. This is the beginning of global citizenship. Conversely, Ikeda rejects technology that deprives people of the customs and cultures that give meaning to daily life. He also rejects the top down perspective of multinational financial institutions that make decisions that affect the lives of ordinary people. By contrast, Ikeda has a grass roots approach to global living. Men living freely in institutions that spring from their own cultures inspire Ikeda's advocacy of a global society. Ikeda contends that when uncorrupted by governments or otherwise left to their own, people will do the right thing, such as seek peace. When institutions are rooted in the people, national lines dissolve as people, embracing one another, cross them to fulfill very human aspirations.

Ikeda points to the proliferation of nongovernmental organizations to make his point, a growing number of which are transnational in character, representing people who reach out to one another across national boundaries to solve common problems. In the process of doing this, the participants in this process find themselves, willy-nilly, becoming global citizens.

Buddhism: The Internal Cause of Peace

Ikeda's political philosophy, transcending the distinction between ancients and moderns, establishes peace as the preeminent human goal, not just a goal of governments. He also provides the vehicle — global citizens of a global society. This is his special contribution to the history of political philosophy.

Ikeda's vast erudition, drawing on knowledge of history, philosophy, literature, psychology and religion appears prominently in his writing. More than a polymath, Ikeda demonstrates exceptional insight into the great works of Western literature — knowledge of which today is rare for Western writers let alone for writers from Asia — moving effortlessly and elegantly between Eastern and Western thought as he discusses ways to think about peace. Buddhism, however, is the true fountainhead of Ikeda's writings. A renowned Buddhist thinker and leader, Ikeda never concludes an argument without illuminating it with the wisdom of his Buddhist faith. Invoking the teachings of Gautama Buddha, he supplements it generously with the wisdom of Nichiren Daishonin, the thirteenth-century Buddhist reformer and spiritual father of the modern day Soka Gakkai, the lay Buddhist organization of which Ikeda was the third president. Ikeda also draws upon the first and second presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the latter Ikeda's beloved mentor.

Ikeda's Buddhism is characterized by its public spiritedness. Public-spirited Buddhism rejects life behind a walled garden in favor of active participation in the agora [or marketplace]. His Buddhism is not passive but — as he reminds us about the commitment to peace itself — requires active engagement of the world. Enlightenment begins with embracing humanity with

all its joy and pain, a posture that will surprise many in the West whose image of Buddhism is inward looking, saffron-robed monks who find enlightenment from withdrawing from the world and its cares. His Buddhism is not exotic — perhaps disappointing some Western intellectuals who look to Buddhism for escape — but, rather, is realistic, even hard-nosed.

Because Ikeda's Buddhism focuses on the internal causes of peace and therefore on the individual, he rejects the simplistic ideological and mechanistic formulations of peace that dominated nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought. In this, he draws upon an antique mode of thought that is no less vital or relevant for being old. Just as Plato argues that only good men can make good government, Ikeda argues that it takes peaceful men to make a peaceful world. Contrary to the tendency of modern thought, Ikeda contends that peace does not result from a mechanistic arrangement of institutions, passions or interests but, rather, from a transformation of individual human beings who, gaining self-knowledge and thus self-control, overcome the desire to exact violence on others.

One expression of how Ikeda looks beyond ideological and mechanistic formulations is his treatment of the individual. Embracing the individual, he rejects individualism. The individual is ennobled by his capacity for Buddhahood, the fulfillment of what is truly human in man. It is the capacity and inheritance of every human being. By contrast, individualism is an ideology, defining man by the lowest common denominator. Viewing men as atoms in a universe of nondescript atoms, the doctrine of individualism proclaims that forces external to man decide his fate. Rooting the peace process in the individual humanizes the process and focuses on building a coalition for peace one person at a time. While it is tempting to address the sources of war with grand theories that point to underlying causes, in the end such theories are unreliable and doomed to fail because they disregard what is most human about man. Slow but certain characterizes Ikeda's approach to the peace process.

Ikeda's Buddhism is not just another variant of the "feel good" philosophies that are so popular today. It is neither confessional nor does it ooze with sentimentality. It is not therapeutic Buddhism but, rather, a faith drawn from ancient texts that identifies the whole person with the timeless law of the universe. "Getting in touch with yourself" has little meaning in Ikeda's philosophy disassociated from life's ultimate reality. His Buddhist thought commences with the Mystic Law, the law of cause and effect, showing the oneness or wholeness of the universe by providing a common thread to its disparate parts. The Law tells men that they are at home in the universe, not alienated from it, as is the teaching of so many contemporary philosophers. The Law is not a principle of creation, as that term is known in the West; it nevertheless links the individual to the first cause of all things (as we would say in the Jewish and Christian worlds). The Law recognizes the inherent cause and effect of everything in the universe, thus recognizing how any one element affects all others. Making a human revolution — the ultimate recognition of the centrality of the Law — is not an easy matter. It takes work to obtain it and requires a lifetime of commitment. It is a way of life for the practitioner and a model for those who, seeing what the practice does, start on the path towards their own human revolution.

A Proactive Pacifist

Ikeda calls himself a pacifist. Certainly he is a pacifist of a different stripe by comparison to the Western version. Pacifism in the West, largely based on Biblical text, turns the other cheek, surrendering the right of self-defense. Admiring Gandhi's commitment to non-violence, Ikeda admits within reason the legitimacy of a nation's concern for its national security. Nor does he embrace the cause of unilateral disarmament, although he insists upon the immediate abolition

of nuclear weapons. Ikeda's pacifism is more complex than the pacifism of the West. Abhorring violence, he is not utopian in his approach to peace largely because he believes that the ultimate source of peace is internal, a potential of every human being. Ikeda is a muscular pacifist. Standing up to injustice, he urges his reader to seek victory in life, assuming a proactive, engaged attitude toward the battle for a more peaceful world.

Often described as a visionary, Ikeda excels at translating theory into practice as evidenced by the many organizations and institutions of which he is the founder. The Soka Gakkai International, of which he is now president, has branch organizations in 163 countries and territories. He is also the founder of a school system that includes kindergarten, grade and intermediate schools, high schools and universities. Soka University of Japan has more than 7,000 students, and in the United States, Soka University of America will soon open its doors to its first undergraduate class. SUA will offer students a curriculum that responds to Ikeda's vision of what it means to lead a fully human life. Over the last twenty years, he has built museums, cultural organizations and institutes, including the Pacific Basin Research Center, a joint project of Harvard University and Soka University.

These institutions and many others — the list is too long to mention here — demonstrate practical virtue of an uncommon sort. At the heart of practical virtue is prudence, unusual insight and judgment that results from experience and from knowledge of human nature. Ikeda is long on both. As with men of great practical virtue, Ikeda does not discard what is already in place but, rather, working with things as they are, moves them toward what they could become.

Supporter of the United Nations

Consider Ikeda's discussion of enhancing the role of NGOs in the United Nations, one of the practical peace proposals to be found in the book. These private and voluntary associations, he argues, are early warning systems for flash points around the globe spanning a range of potential crises from looming environmental disasters to clashes among rival ethnic groups. NGOs now operate on the periphery of the United Nations. Ikeda proposes to give them access to the General Assembly and the Security Council, improving the flow of information and, thereby, the decision-making systems of the world body. NGOs bring people into the process of decision-making and peace making. As grass roots organizations, NGOs grow out of the culture and needs of people. Besides information, they give heart and soul to large, mechanically organized institutions. Moreover, NGOs bring a transnational perspective to their work, providing the United Nations with a people's perspective that crosses traditional boundaries. He also favors the United Nations as a means of promoting global civilization, the ultimate guarantor of world peace, since the United Nations is a vehicle, the only vehicle of its kind, for harmonizing differences. By proposing that NGOs become a familiar part of the highest decision-making bodies of the United Nations, Ikeda suggests a union of substantial new value, enabling each of the parts to fulfill more completely their inherent mission.

This book charms while it persuades. Part of the charm of Ikeda's art of writing is that he draws on the works of great authors but never speaks to his audience except in language that is plain and intelligible. One might say of Ikeda's art of writing that while he speaks of concepts that are not always simple to grasp, he always talks about them simply. Ikeda draws in his reader by making each one feel as if he is speaking directly to him or her — a style that flows from his knowledge of people and his belief in the importance of the individual.

His book is also a testament to his extraordinary education. Largely self-taught, Ikeda's education, manifesting itself on every page, recalls a time when education had something to do with being schooled in the great works of the great minds. Ikeda's book reaffirms something

that, previously acknowledged, has become increasingly disregarded by a society that celebrates specialization and instantaneous gratification. Ikeda's book reminds us that ideas have consequences for how one should live life. It also reaffirms the significance of books — especially great books — as something real, something living that can mold the sensibilities of the heart. Ikeda is a son of the liberal arts, thoughtful in speech and deed, compassionate of heart, and resolute of mind. I hope that the students of Soka University of America, his new American university, will receive just a smidgen of the kind of education that Ikeda was able to give himself. Such students will be truly fortunate.

Ikeda's education is also the result of his mentor who recognized in Ikeda an extraordinary young mind. This relationship is wonderfully documented in Ikeda's history of the founding of the Soka Gakkai, *The Human Revolution*, a work, happily, that is obtainable in English translation. Since only a fraction of Ikeda's writings are available in English — an omission that needs to be addressed without further delay — the English reading public owes Middleway Press a debt of gratitude for *For the Sake of Peace*, an anthology of Ikeda's writings on peace over the last twenty years.