



Soka Gakkai

Buddhism in Action for Peace

Empowering individuals
toward positive global change



“A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and, further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind.”

Daisaku Ikeda



Soka Gakkai at a Glance

The Soka Gakkai is a global community-based Buddhist organization that promotes peace, culture and education centered on respect for the dignity of life. Its members in 192 countries and territories around the world study and put into practice the humanistic philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism.

Soka Gakkai members strive to actualize their inherent potential while contributing to their local communities and responding to the shared issues facing humankind.

The conviction that individual happiness and the realization of peace are inextricably linked is central to the Soka Gakkai, as is a commitment to dialogue and nonviolence.





Buddhist Lineage

The teachings upheld by the Soka Gakkai belong to the tradition of Buddhist humanism that originated with Shakyamuni Buddha on the Indian subcontinent some 2,500 years ago. A core value is respect for the dignity of life and all human beings.

After awakening to the true nature of life, Shakyamuni traveled widely, sharing his wisdom with others. His teachings were compiled by his

disciples in the centuries that followed. Among them was the Lotus Sutra, an important teaching of Mahayana Buddhism, which holds that Buddhahood—characterized by compassion, wisdom and courage—is inherent within every person.

The teachings of the Lotus Sutra were transmitted and developed by Buddhist scholars and teachers in India, China and Japan, most

notably Zhiyi (the Great Teacher Tiantai) in China and Nichiren (1222–82) in Japan.

In the thirteenth century, Nichiren defined the essence of the Lotus Sutra as “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo,” teaching that through chanting this phrase all people can tap into their inherent Buddhahood to overcome suffering and live fulfilled and happy lives.



The Great Stupa at Sanchi, India, commissioned by the Buddhist emperor Ashoka in the third century BCE



Dunhuang, in Western China, a key point on the Silk Road, home to hundreds of caves featuring early Buddhist art and statues

A grassroots movement in 192 countries and territories worldwide, the Soka Gakkai is dedicated to sharing the empowering message of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Buddhism in today's world.



A Lotus Sutra manuscript dating from the ninth or tenth century CE

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Kamakura, where, some 800 years ago, Nichiren lived and taught

History



Josei Toda makes a declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons, seen as the starting point of the Soka Gakkai's peace movement

1957

1930

The Soka Gakkai is founded by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda



The Soka Gakkai's roots date back to 1930 in Japan, when Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda founded the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for Value-Creating Education), the forerunner of the Soka Gakkai (Society for the Creation of Value).

With Makiguchi as its first president, the organization began as a group of teachers focused on educational

reform but later developed into a movement dedicated to the betterment of society through individual inner transformation based on Nichiren Buddhism.

Refusing to adhere to the State Shinto religion used by the militarist government to exert ideological control over the population at the time, Makiguchi and Toda were

imprisoned as "thought criminals" in 1943. Makiguchi died in prison, and Toda, who was released in 1945, went on to rebuild the Soka Gakkai, later becoming its second president.

In 1947, Daisaku Ikeda first encountered Josei Toda and joined the Soka Gakkai. Ikeda took Toda as his mentor and, in 1960, became the



The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is founded



1975

1960

Daisaku Ikeda becomes third president of the Soka Gakkai and makes his first visit to members outside of Japan



2013

The Hall of the Great Vow for Kosen-rufu, where Soka Gakkai members renew their commitment to work for peace, opens in Tokyo

third president, marking the beginning of the Soka Gakkai's growth internationally.

The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) was formed in 1975 as a global association to link independent Soka Gakkai organizations around the world, and Ikeda became its president.

Since 1983, the SGI has been accredited as a nongovernmental organization with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In 2017, the Soka Gakkai adopted its new Constitution, clarifying the role of the founding presidents, its global structure, essential doctrinal stance and objective of promoting

Nichiren Buddhism for the sake of peace and human happiness.

In 2021, the Soka Gakkai Charter was adopted, articulating the principles guiding the organization's social engagement grounded in an unwavering commitment to nonviolence and the culture of peace.

Daily Practice

The basic daily Buddhist practice of Soka Gakkai members, carried out in their own homes, is chanting the phrase “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” and reciting excerpts of the Lotus Sutra.

Members also gather for regular small-scale local discussion meetings where they study Buddhist principles and how to apply them in everyday life. Participants also share

experiences of using Buddhist practice to tackle challenges and achieve their goals in life.



USA



UK



Panama



Peru



Kenya

“Life is the foremost of all treasures. It is expounded that even the treasures of the entire major world system cannot equal the value of one’s body and life.” *Nichiren*



Italy



Japan



India



Thailand



Australia



Action on Global Issues

“Seeds of Hope & Action: Making the SDGs a Reality” exhibition created by the SGI and the Earth Charter International on display in Argentina

The Soka Gakkai and the SGI engage in activities to promote the culture of peace. To this end, each local organization develops activities in line with its unique cultural context. The SGI has been accredited as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 1983.

Awareness-raising activities and advocacy are carried out in six key focus areas: peace; disarmament; sustainability and climate change; human rights education; humanitarian relief; and gender equality and women’s empowerment. The range of activities includes exhibitions, symposiums, interfaith dialogue and support of United Nations initiatives.

Beginning in 1983, Daisaku Ikeda authored 40 annual peace proposals directed toward the international community addressing issues facing humanity and suggesting solutions and responses grounded in Buddhist philosophy.

These proposals give impetus and direction to the organization’s grassroots efforts to tackle global problems and build the culture of peace.



At Soka Bunka (Culture) Center in Tokyo, “Portraits of the Hibakusha: 80 Years Remembered” exhibition, created by 80,000 Voices in collaboration with photographer Patrick Boyd and supported by the SGI



“Support for Women’s Groups in the Restoration of Forest Landscapes in Togo,” a joint project with ITTO



SGI-UK representative speaks on interfaith panel at COP28 in Dubai, UAE



Soka Gakkai Malaysia members support their community after heavy floods



Peace

Based on respect for the dignity and preciousness of life, the Soka Gakkai and the SGI promote the culture of peace as a set of values, attitudes and ways of life that reject violence and are centered on dialogue. The culture of peace provides a framework through which the various focus areas are interrelated and interconnected.



Disarmament

The SGI's disarmament work focuses on nuclear weapons abolition and stopping killer robots (autonomous weapons systems), weapons that are premised on the negation of the humanity of others and their right to life. The SGI's activities to expand global grassroots solidarity against these weapons include exhibitions, petitions and books recording the testimonies of atomic bomb survivors. The SGI also participates in UN policymaking processes on nuclear disarmament and is an active member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the Stop Killer Robots (SKR) coalition.



Sustainability and Climate Change

Based on an awareness of our interconnectedness with each other and the natural world, the SGI's efforts to promote sustainability and climate action seek to engage a broad spectrum of people and inspire hope in each person's ability to initiate change. They include awareness-raising exhibitions, advocacy initiatives promoting the role of youth, and reforestation projects in West Africa and are designed to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promote the Earth Charter. Local Soka Gakkai organizations also engage in cleanups, tree plantings and seminars.



Human Rights Education

Activities for human rights education support the World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-) and the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2011). Centered on the idea that the inner transformation of the individual is the foundation for structural and systemic change in society, the SGI has worked with OHCHR and other organizations to develop documentaries, exhibitions and other educational tools that illustrate the positive impact of human rights education and promote a culture of human rights.



Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The SGI develops activities to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, supporting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and gender dimensions of the SDGs. The initiatives include developing educational tools and advocating at the UN through events in support of UN Women and the Commission on the Status of Women, as well as statements to amplify women's voices.



Humanitarian Relief

Local Soka Gakkai organizations respond to disasters, aiming to empower those affected and restore dignity by distributing supplies, offering shelter and care at their centers and liaising with government and relief agencies. The Soka Gakkai also supports refugee relief efforts through the UNHCR and NGOs. In collaboration with other organizations, the SGI is working to highlight the unique ways faith-based organizations (FBOs) can assist in disaster risk reduction, relief and recovery.

Soka Gakkai Charter



The Soka Gakkai Charter articulates the organization's purposes, the ideals motivating its activities and its guiding principles in the realm of social engagement as a global organization that aims to promote peace, culture and education.

Preamble

We, the Soka Gakkai organizations and members throughout the world, share the aim and mission of promoting peace, culture and education based on the Buddhist teaching of respect for the dignity of life.

In the face of multiple, interlocking crises, it is clear that humanity's survival and flourishing must be a shared, cooperative undertaking founded in an awareness of our intimate connections with all forms

of life. Everyone's contribution is needed, and no one must be left behind.

We believe that the teachings of Nichiren Buddhism offer a means for each of us to manifest within the realities of daily life the unlimited capacity for wisdom, courage and compassion we all possess. We therefore seek to foster individuals who are empowered to take on the daunting challenges we face and are committed to building a more just

and sustainable world for future generations.

We, the respective organizations of the Soka Gakkai, raising high the banner of global citizenship, the spirit of active tolerance and respect for human dignity, and determined to confront the threats facing humankind based on an unwavering commitment to nonviolence and the culture of peace, hereby adopt this charter, affirming the following purposes and principles.

Purposes and Principles

1. The Soka Gakkai will contribute to peace, culture and education based on the Buddhist teaching of respect for the dignity of all life.
2. The Soka Gakkai will promote an understanding of Nichiren Buddhism through grassroots dialogue and exchange, thereby contributing to the realization of human happiness and well-being.
3. The Soka Gakkai will respect and promote freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
4. The Soka Gakkai will, based on the Buddhist spirit of tolerance, respect other religious and philosophical traditions, engaging in dialogue and working together with them toward the resolution of the fundamental challenges confronting humankind.
5. The Soka Gakkai will respect local cultures and customs, and the autonomy of each organization. Each organization will develop its activities in accordance with the laws and conditions prevailing in that country or territory and will encourage its members to contribute to society as responsible citizens.
6. The Soka Gakkai will work for peace and a world free from nuclear weapons and will promote just and sustainable development.
7. The Soka Gakkai will safeguard and promote human rights. It will not discriminate against any individual and will oppose all forms of discrimination. It will contribute to the achievement of gender equality and promote the empowerment of women.
8. The Soka Gakkai will respect cultural diversity and promote intercultural exchange, thereby contributing to mutual understanding and cooperation among the world's peoples.
9. The Soka Gakkai is committed to building a sustainable world for future generations, addressing the climate crisis, and protecting and caring for the ecosystems of Earth.
10. The Soka Gakkai will promote education, learning and scholarship, to enable all people to cultivate their individual character and enjoy contributive, fulfilling and happy lives.

November 18, 2021

Founding Presidents: Buddhism in Action for Peace



First President
Tsunesaburo Makiguchi
www.tmakiguchi.org

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944) founded the forerunner to the Soka Gakkai, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for Value-Creating Education), on November 18, 1930, together with his disciple Josei Toda, and served as the organization's first president. An educator and philosopher, Makiguchi was imprisoned during World War II for opposing the policies of Japan's militarist government and died in prison.

The Soka Gakkai (Society for the Creation of Value) upholds a spiritual lineage that originated some 2,500 years ago with Shakyamuni Buddha and has been continued by Buddhist teachers in India, China and Japan, reaching its most profound expression in the teachings of Nichiren (1222–82).

The first three presidents of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Josei Toda and Daisaku Ikeda, revived Nichiren Buddhism in the modern age and created the basis for its development as a globally accessible philosophy. Their shared commitment to this effort exemplifies the mentor-disciple relationship in Buddhism. They are respected as the founding presidents and mentors of the organization.



Second President
Josei Toda
www.joseitoda.org

Josei Toda (1900–58), Makiguchi's disciple and a fellow educator, cofounded the Soka Gakkai and was imprisoned together with his mentor during the war. On his release from prison, he reestablished the Soka Gakkai and developed a membership of some 750,000 households throughout Japan by the time of his death. Toda was ardently opposed to war, and his 1957 Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons is seen as the starting point of the organization's peace movement.



Third President
Daisaku Ikeda
www.daisakuikeda.org

Daisaku Ikeda (1928–2023) joined the Soka Gakkai at the age of 19 after encountering Josei Toda. Taking Toda as his lifelong mentor,

Ikeda worked closely with him to develop the organization, becoming its third president in 1960. In 1975, the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) was established, as a global association to link independent Soka Gakkai organizations around the world, and Ikeda became its president. He pursued dialogue with leaders, scholars and cultural figures from around the world and established institutions promoting peace research, dialogue and cultural exchange. He devoted his life to spreading the humanistic ideals of Buddhism and promoting a lasting culture of peace through dialogue.



President
Minoru Harada

Minoru Harada (1941–) became president of the Soka Gakkai in 2006. After graduating from the University of Tokyo in 1964, he served in numerous leadership positions throughout the organization. He continues to guide the Soka Gakkai in its commitment to peace based on the spirit of the founding presidents.



“The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being.”

Nichiren



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