

an ancient Tradition...

On May 3, 1960, Daisaku Ikeda became the third president. Within six months, he established chapters in the United States and South American countries, followed a year later by organizations in nine European countries. He continues to provide leadership for the global SGI association, which now includes members in more than 185 countries and territories. Mr. Ikeda has founded a number of educational and cultural institutions which seek to foster the values of peace, culture and education.

SGI-Affiliated Institutions

Soka University of America www.soka.edu

The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century
www.brc21.org

Soka Gakkai International www.sgi.org

Soka Gakkai of Japan www.sokagakkai.info

Toda Peace Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research www.toda.org

Soka University of Japan www.soka.ac.jp

Institute of Oriental Philosophy www.iop.or.jp

Tokyo Fuji Art Museum www.fujibi.or.jp/

The Min-on Concert Association www.min-on.or.jp

The origins of the SGI-USA worldview can be traced to the teachings of the Buddha Shakyamuni, who lived some 2,500 years ago in what is modern-day Nepal. Born Gautama Siddhartha, he abandoned his sheltered, princely life and sought instead to understand the inescapable sufferings of every human being—birth, aging, sickness and death—and the means by which these sufferings could be overcome.

Following his enlightenment at age 32, he traveled throughout India for 50 years, sharing the wisdom he had discovered. The term *Buddha*, or “enlightened one,” is applied to any human being who realizes the eternity of life and the operation of cause and effect throughout the three existences of past, present and future.

Shakyamuni’s intuitive realization of this universal Law (Skt: *Dharma*) is most succinctly articulated in the Lotus Sutra, widely considered his most definitive teaching. Here the existence of the innate and universal truth, known as the Buddha nature, was revealed as inherent in all forms of being. The Lotus Sutra affirms that the realities of daily life provide both motivation and opportunity for spiritual transformation.

One of the most significant proponents of the Lotus Sutra was the 13th-century Buddhist reformer, Nichiren Daishonin, of whom the late Masaharu Anesaki, wrote: “He stands almost a unique figure in the history of Buddhism, not alone because of his persistence through hardship and persecution ... [but also as] an eloquent speaker, a powerful writer, and a man of tender heart.”¹

In one of his earliest writings, Nichiren declares both the purpose of his teaching and its conclusion: “If you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death you have endured since time without beginning and attain supreme enlightenment in this lifetime, you must awaken to the mystic truth which has always been within your life. This truth is Myoho-enge-kyo. Chanting [Nam] Myoho-enge-kyo will therefore enable you to grasp the mystic truth innate in all life.”²

The workings of the universe are an expression of a single principle or Law, expressed as Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. By putting their lives into harmony with this Law, people can unlock their hidden potential and achieve creative harmony with the environment. This is the ultimate expression of individual empowerment that each person can transform the inevitable sufferings of life into sources of growth and fulfillment and become a positive influence in his or her family and community.

¹Masaharu Anesaki, *Nichiren, The Buddhist Prophet* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1916), p. 3.

²*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, “On Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime” (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1999), p. 3.

To learn more about us, visit our web site at:

www.sgi-usa.org



Applying Buddhist Values Building a Culture of Peace

Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA) is an American Buddhist association that promotes peace and personal happiness based on the teachings of the Nichiren school of Mahayana Buddhism. Our members are from a broad range of ethnic and social backgrounds and reflect the diversity of U.S. society.

With more than 80 centers throughout the country, SGI-USA makes its headquarters in Santa Monica, California. We are affiliated with the worldwide Soka Gakkai International which has 12 million members in over 185 countries and territories.



Soka Gakkai International-USA

what we Believe...

“Our task is to establish a firm inner world, a robust sense of self that will not be swayed or shaken by the most trying circumstances or pressing adversity. Only when efforts to reform society have as their point of departure the reformation of the inner life— human revolution— will they lead us with certainty to a world of lasting peace and true human security.”

Daisaku Ikeda

Our philosophy is rooted in the concept of “human revolution,” a process of inner transformation through Buddhist practice. It is an awakening that leads us to develop our character; to cultivate wisdom, courage, and compassion; and to act not only for our personal fulfillment but also for the betterment of society.

The SGI Charter, adopted in 1995, gives voice to our beliefs and sets forth our guidelines for social engagement. The basic principles of the Charter are:

- ❖ to promote an understanding of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism
- ❖ to contribute to peace, culture and education within society
- ❖ to safeguard fundamental human rights and eliminate discrimination
- ❖ to respect and protect freedom of religion and religious expression
- ❖ to work together with other religions to resolve issues affecting humanity
- ❖ to respect cultural diversity and promote cultural exchange
- ❖ to encourage the protection of nature and the environment

what we Do...

The core activity for all SGI-USA members is the neighborhood discussion meeting. These informal gatherings bring people together for Buddhist prayer, study, sharing and discussion of ways Buddhism can be applied to the challenges of daily living.

In addition, SGI-USA is involved in non-sectarian, public awareness activities to promote the values of peace, culture and education. We work with other civil-society and non-governmental groups to develop youth programs, traveling exhibits, cultural events and symposia. These have included:

Building a Culture of Peace: SGI-USA’s programs and events in this area have gained recognition for their ability to evoke a sense of personal responsibility for peace, human rights and our natural environment.

Treasuring the Future—Children’s Rights and Realities:

An interactive exhibit on the status of children’s rights

Ecology and Human Life: An exhibit exploring the human dimension of the environmental challenge

Victory Over Violence: A grassroots educational initiative, including multimedia resources, to address the causes of youth violence

Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century: An exhibit on the life of the Nobel Prize-winning chemist and pacifist

Promoting Tolerance Through Dialogue: SGI-USA sponsors and participates in a number of inter-religious conferences and symposia to address common humanitarian concerns.

Education for Sustainable Development and the Earth Charter: SGI-USA has endorsed and promoted the Earth Charter as an awareness raising tool to engage all people in the values of global ethics and sustainability. We have participated in thousands of grassroots dialogues, community-based activities, the annual Earth Charter Community Summits and collaborations with Earth Charter USA partners.

a modern Heritage...

Founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi first used the term *Soka Gakkai* (society for the creation of value) in 1930 when he published his insightful book *Value Creating Educational Theory*. He asserted that the purpose of education should not be the mere training of workers for Japan’s growing industrial machine, but the development of the human ability to create “value” (i.e., improvement, beauty and social good) in their daily lives. His humanistic, student-centered views often brought him into conflict with authority. Arrested with other top Soka Gakkai leaders in 1943 as a “thought criminal” for his unyielding opposition to the militarist regime and its forced imposition of State Shinto, Makiguchi died in prison of malnutrition and mistreatment at the age of 73 in November 1944.

Makiguchi’s close disciple, Josei Toda, survived the ordeal and was released from a Tokyo prison just weeks before the world’s first use of the atomic bomb, in July 1945. Determined to rebuild the Soka Gakkai, Toda set about developing its membership from less than 3,000 families when he assumed the presidency in 1951 to more than 750,000 before his death in 1958. The Soka Gakkai’s remarkable early growth stemmed from its commitment to help people overcome their suffering in the postwar chaos. Toda confirmed the Soka Gakkai’s pacifist stance in 1957 by taking a strong and pioneering public position against the use of nuclear weapons.

SGI-USA exhibits promote public awareness and dialogue on major social issues.

