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, SGI President

WHAT IS SGI?
The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a community-based Buddhist organization that promotes peace, culture and education centered on respect for the dignity of life. SGI members uphold the humanistic philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism in 192 countries and territories around the world.

Individual SGI members strive to actualize their inherent potential while contributing as empowered global citizens to their local communities and responding to the shared issues facing humankind. The SGI’s efforts to help build a lasting culture of peace are based on a commitment to dialogue and nonviolence, and the understanding that individual happiness and the realization of a peaceful world are inextricably linked.

As a nongovernmental organization with formal ties to the United Nations, the SGI also collaborates with other civil society organizations, intergovernmental agencies and faith groups in the fields of nuclear disarmament, human rights education, sustainable development and humanitarian relief.
The teachings upheld by the SGI belong to the tradition of Buddhist humanism that originated with Shakyamuni on the Indian subcontinent. 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. The truth to which he was enlightened is expounded in the Lotus Sutra, a central 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 (Great Teacher Tiantai) in China and Nichiren in Japan. In the 13th century, the Japanese priest Nichiren expressed the essence of the Lotus Sutra as “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.” He taught the practice of chanting this phrase as a means for all people to overcome suffering and lead happy and fulfilled lives.

A grassroots movement with 12 million members worldwide, the SGI is dedicated to sharing the empowering message of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren in today’s world.
The organizational roots of the SGI date back to 1930 in Japan, when Tsonesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda founded 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.

Resisting pressure from Japan’s militarist government to abandon their religious beliefs, Makiguchi and Toda were imprisoned as “thought criminals” in 1943. Makiguchi died in prison, and Toda emerged in 1945 to rebuild the Soka Gakkai, later becoming the second president.

In 1947, amidst the chaos of postwar Japan, Daisaku Ikeda encountered Josei Toda—who became his mentor—and joined the Soka Gakkai. In 1960, Ikeda became the third president, at the time of the emergence of a growing membership around the world.

The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) was officially formed in 1975 with Ikeda as its president, linking independent SGI organizations around the world that embrace Buddhism while respecting local cultures and traditions.

The core daily Buddhist practice of SGI members, carried out in their own homes, is chanting the phrase “Nam-myoho-reno-kyo” and reciting excerpts of the Lotus Sutra. SGI members also gather for regular local discussion meetings where they study Buddhist principles and their application to everyday life. Participants in these meetings share how they have successfully transformed their lives and overcome challenges through their Buddhist practice—a process known as human revolution—inspiring others to summon the courage to do the same.

“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.”

Alchiyama
Guided by the shared goal of contributing to peace, culture and education based on respect for the dignity of life, local SGI organizations develop activities in line with the cultural contexts of their respective societies.

Key are awareness-raising activities such as exhibitions, symposiums and conferences, as well as interfaith dialogue and campaigns to promote nonviolence. Other grassroots activities include cultural events, community outreach programs and humanitarian relief in times of crisis.

Every year since 1983, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda has authored peace proposals directed toward the international community that address issues facing humanity, suggesting solutions and responses grounded in Buddhist philosophy.

Many of the themes raised in these peace proposals are taken up by the SGI and other NGOs, as well as providing inspiration for the contributions to society of individual SGI members around the world.

“Education must inspire the faith that each of us has both the power and the responsibility to effect positive change on a global scale.”

Daisaku Ikeda
SGI CHARTER

PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES

PREAMBLE

We, the constituent organizations and members of the Soka Gakkai International (hereinafter called SGI), embrace the fundamental aim and mission of contributing to peace, culture and education based on the philosophy and ideals of the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin.

We recognize that at no other time in history has humankind experienced such an intense juxtaposition of war and peace, discrimination and equality, poverty and abundance as in the 20th century; that the development of increasingly sophisticated military technology, exemplified by nuclear weapons, has created a situation where the very survival of the human species hangs in the balance; that humanity’s egoism and intemperance have engendered global problems, including degradation of the natural environment and widening economic chasms between developed and developing nations, with serious repercussions for humankind’s collective future.

We believe that Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, a humanistic philosophy of infinite respect for the sanctity of life and all-encompassing compassion, enables individuals to cultivate and bring forth their inherent wisdom and, nurturing the creativity of the human spirit, to surmount the difficulties and crises facing humankind and realize a society of peaceful and prosperous coexistence.

We, the constituent organizations and members of SGI, therefore, being determined to raise high the banner of world citizenship, the spirit of tolerance, and respect for human rights based on the humanistic spirit of Buddhism, and to challenge the global issues that face humankind through dialogue and practical efforts based on a steadfast commitment to nonviolence, hereby adopt this charter, affirming the following purposes and principles:

PURPOSES AND PRINCIPLES

1 | SGI shall contribute to peace, culture and education for the happiness and welfare of all humanity based on Buddhist respect for the sanctity of life.
2 | SGI, based on the ideal of world citizenship, shall safeguard fundamental human rights and not discriminate against any individual on any grounds.
3 | SGI shall respect and protect the freedom of religion and religious expression.
4 | SGI shall promote an understanding of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism through grassroots exchange, thereby contributing to individual happiness.
5 | SGI shall, through its constituent organizations, encourage its members to contribute toward the prosperity of their respective societies as good citizens.
6 | SGI shall respect the independence and autonomy of its constituent organizations in accordance with the conditions prevailing in each country.
7 | SGI shall, based on the Buddhist spirit of tolerance, respect other religions, engage in dialogue and work together with them toward the resolution of fundamental issues concerning humanity.
8 | SGI shall respect cultural diversity and promote cultural exchange, thereby creating an international society of mutual understanding and harmony.
9 | SGI shall promote, based on the Buddhist ideal of symbiosis, the protection of nature and the environment.
10 | SGI shall contribute to the promotion of education, in pursuit of truth as well as the development of scholarship, to enable all people to cultivate their individual character and enjoy fulfilling and happy lives.

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

Nichiren

The SGI Charter was adopted by its Board of Directors on October 16, 1995