

## THE PATH OF MENTOR AND DISCIPLE

The Soka Gakkai (Value-Creating Society) was founded in 1930 by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), a pioneer in the philosophy of education, and Josei Toda (1900–58), a teacher and entrepreneur, as a society of teachers committed to applying the humanistic principles of Buddhism in their work as educators. Originally called the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value-Creating Education Society), the group took its name from a pedagogical theory published by Mr. Makiguchi in the same year, which defines the principal purpose of education as the creation of values.

During the 1930s, amid heightened global tensions and instability, Japan grew increasingly militant and nationalistic. To strengthen its control over the populace, the Japanese government imposed a national ideology known as State Shinto, which mandated worship of the emperor, and instituted “thought control” policies that severely limited freedom of speech and provided harsh penalties for anyone critical of the state.

As a Buddhist, Mr. Makiguchi vigorously opposed the government’s policies, particularly the suppression of religious freedom. In 1943, he was arrested and imprisoned on charges of violating the Peace Preservation Law of 1925 and committing blasphemy against the emperor. Refusing to the end to recant his views, Mr. Makiguchi died from malnutrition in prison on Nov. 18 the following year.

Mr. Toda had been imprisoned on the same charges as Mr. Makiguchi and, like his mentor, also remained true to his convictions. Upon his release in 1945, shortly before the war’s end, he immediately set about reconstructing the Soka Gakkai. The change in name reflected his intention to develop a broad-ranging movement for peace based on Buddhist principles that would not be limited to educators but would include people from all walks of life.

In 1951, Mr. Toda became the second president of the Soka Gakkai. On Sept. 8, 1957, he issued an impassioned call for the abolition of nuclear weapons. In this document, titled the “Declaration against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs,” he characterized the production and use of nuclear weapons as satanic and asserted the inalienable right to life of all people. This declaration has become the prime point of the Soka Gakkai’s movement to rid the world of nuclear weapons and secure lasting peace.

Under President Toda’s leadership, the Soka Gakkai achieved a membership of more than 750,000 households, establishing the group as a major force for peace in Japan. His achievements were realized with the help of the young Daisaku Ikeda. Profoundly impressed by Mr. Toda’s strength of conviction and character, he joined the Soka Gakkai in 1947. After his mentor’s death on April 2, 1958, he assumed responsibility for the further development of the movement.

Recalling his relationship with Mr. Toda, President Ikeda has said: “The mentor and disciple spirit that bound Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda together is the Soka Gakkai’s eternal prime point. Mr. Makiguchi stood squarely in the face of a storm of persecutions and Mr. Toda, with the heart of a lion, stood at his side. Having the same dedication to the spirit of mentor and disciple, I have stood up to succeed Mr. Toda as the third president. In other words, the present development of the Soka Gakkai is a result of the mentor–disciple relationship, which each of us has followed faithfully. We have thereby created a foundation that will endure for all ages. Herein lies the spirit of the Soka Gakkai;

it is the founding spirit.”

Carrying on his mentor’s vision, President Ikeda founded the Soka Gakkai International in 1975. In the past 25 years, the SGI has spread to 156 countries and territories around the world. The SGI has become one of the world’s foremost movements for lasting peace and human happiness.