

**SGI President Ikeda's Essay**  
**Steel Will and Warmth: President Makiguchi**  
**By HO GOKU**

*Sincerity, earnestness, strictness, integrity* — these words come to mind whenever I see photographs of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, father of the Soka movement and first Soka Gakkai president. I always feel the penetrating gleam in his eyes.

He was a strict mentor to his disciples, but he was even stricter with himself. His powerful, indomitable faith, which led him to fight resolutely against military oppression and, indeed, die for his beliefs, is unequivocal proof of this.



At this year's Soka Gakkai Day (May 3) Commemorative Headquarters Leaders Meeting, I shared the little-known fact that Mr. Makiguchi had once taught an ethics class at the Tokyo Higher Technical School, predecessor of the Shibaura Institute of Technology. According to the recollections of a former student, Mr. Makiguchi, who wished for world peace more than anything, denounced the widespread anti-Chinese attitudes among the Japanese at that time.

"Many Japanese maintain that the Chinese are given to lying and deceit," Mr. Makiguchi observed, "but that is not true. If it were, then how could their marvelous culture have flourished as it has for 5,000 years? That doesn't make sense."

He further asserted: "If we trust others and communicate with them openly and honestly, they will respond in turn. That is the theory of value." These remarks were when the country was in the midst of the Sino-Japanese War. He wanted to break through the narrow-minded prejudices of his fellow Japanese.

A short time later, the student who shared these reminiscences received his draft notice and was forced to interrupt his studies to fight in China. There he met the Chinese people face to face and learned that everything Mr. Makiguchi said was true.



Even after Mr. Makiguchi was arrested and imprisoned, he continued to speak out with confidence and conviction. During interrogations with the prosecutors, he boldly stated his views on correct and erroneous religious teachings.

He even told his guard about the greatness of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and persuaded him to embrace faith in the Gohonzon. Mr. Makiguchi never showed the least trace of fear or compromise.

But prison life was harsh and eventually took its toll on the elderly man's health. He grew physically weaker with each passing day. Even his guard urged him to move to the prison infirmary. But Makiguchi steadfastly refused.

The day before he died, he finally agreed. Seeing the terribly weak state he was in, his guard offered to carry him on his back to the infirmary. Mr. Makiguchi insisted he was fine and walked there on his own two feet.

On the way, his legs folded under him, and he collapsed on the floor. But he picked himself up again and, politely yet firmly refusing the guard's helping hand, finished the trip unaided. To the end, he faced his persecution for the sake of the Law unflinchingly with the courage of a lion.

Mr. Makiguchi's daughter-in-law Sadako, the wife of his son Yozo, learned these details

directly from the guard.



Yet for all his steel will and rigorous self-discipline, Mr. Makiguchi was an infinitely warm, gentle person. When he was starting out in his career, teaching at an elementary school attached to Hokkaido Teachers College, the present-day Hokkaido University of Education, he would go outside on snowy mornings to meet his students part way and walk them to school. He'd carry the little ones on his back and hold the hands of the older girls and boys.

He was especially considerate of those children who suffered from weak constitutions or were ill. If any of the children had frozen, badly chapped hands, he'd heat some water in the classroom and gently soak their hands until they were warmed.

When he was principal of Mikasa Elementary School in Tokyo, he would even provide lunches out of his own money for those students too poor to bring their own. He was aware of the situation of each and every child. And he tried to help them all.

He was a very caring, loving teacher.



One winter evening, a woman came to him for guidance. When she was about to return home, her infant bundled on her back, Mr. Makiguchi tucked some folded newspapers into the back of the child's kimono. "If you do this, he'll be as warm as if he were wearing an extra layer of clothing," he said.

Another time, Makiguchi knelt down on a wintry, windswept train platform to repair the broken sandal strap of an elderly woman. What consideration and kindness he displayed! This rare combination of courage so strong it was fearless in the face of death, and boundless concern for others is true testimony to the greatness of Mr. Makiguchi's character.

He had a tremendous love and compassion for people, which inspired him to boldly champion the cause of truth and justice and fight with fierce determination against all that is evil and destructive.

Indomitable faith and unflagging courage give us the capacity to embrace others with limitless warmth and compassion. True kindness to others is always backed by inner strength.



Ignoring injustice brings unhappiness to all. Such a society worries me deeply.

Mr. Makiguchi's life was based on the belief that failing to do good is doing evil. He lived a life of great moral good and service to humanity.

This month marks the 70th anniversary of Mr. Makiguchi's conversion to the Daishonin's Buddhism, and June 6 is his 127th birthday.

Let us ever bear in mind that the Soka Gakkai spirit is perpetuated through our valiant efforts as champions of justice and humanism, just as Mr. Makiguchi did before us — to fight the world's wrongs and to warm and illuminate the hearts of our friends and fellow members with the radiance of character.

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