

living BUDDHISM

August • 2000

Vol. 4 • No. 8

"We need to strengthen our faith. This is the basis for everything. Then we can lead our entire family to happiness. Steadfast faith does not mean projecting a heroic image. It means showing genuine concern and consideration for others' circumstances. Even the smallest act of consideration shines with a brilliant light." Page 32

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LIVING BUDDHISM (USPS 385-750) (ISSN: 1093-5169)

Published monthly by SGI-USA Publications, 606 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90401. Periodicals postage paid at Santa Monica, CA 90401, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster—send address changes and returns to *Living Buddhism*, SGI-USA Subscriptions, P.O. Box 1427, Santa Monica, CA 90406-9907. Copyright© 2000 SGI-USA. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A. Subscription rate: \$50.00 per year, \$90.00 for two years. RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED.

To Our Readers

The series "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra," which started in the April 1995 issue of *Seikyo Times* (*Living Buddhism*), will come to an end in the October issue. For more than five years, it has been a major source of encouragement in faith to many of our readers.

If we broadly define the Lotus Sutra as any dialogue that is full of wisdom based upon the Law, this series of "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra" can be definitely looked upon as the Lotus Sutra of the 21st century. "Universal humanism," which is the theme of this dialogue series, will be crucial to the survival of humanity in this new millennium. In this regard, I would like to note what President Ikeda said in the third installment: "What can I, an ordinary human being, do for others, for society? That is the spirit of the Lotus Sutra. A religion for the

people in the twenty-first century must be an inexhaustible source of such awareness and the energy to carry it out. That is the spirit of the Lotus Sutra.... Nothing is greater or worthier of respect than you yourself—this is the message that the Lotus Sutra calls out to each and every individual." (*The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1 p. 56)

With this series over in October, the editorial staff of *Living Buddhism*, would like to express to President Ikeda and his staff our appreciation for having given us a tool to deepen our faith, strengthen our practice and expand our understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

World Tribune Press will publish this dialogue series in book form in six volumes. The first one will be available at SGI-USA bookstores in August.

Ted Morino
Editor in Chief/Managing Editor

living BUDDHISM

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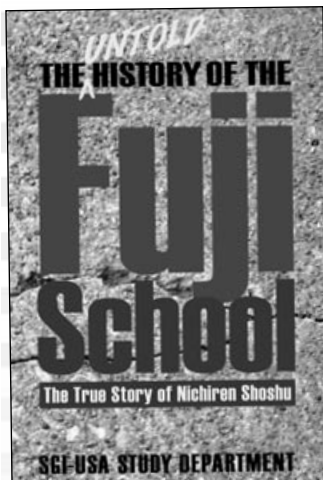
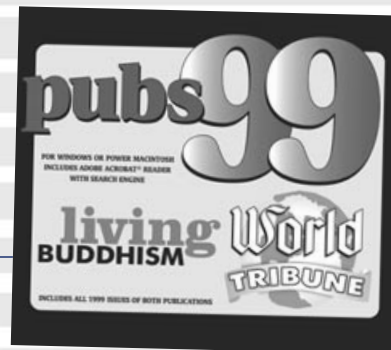
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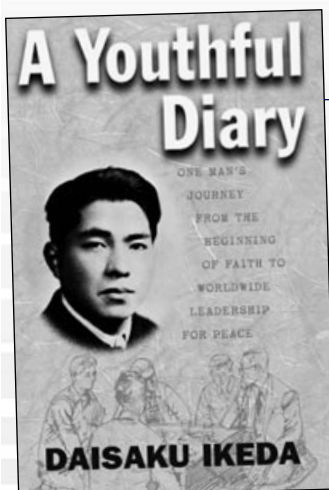
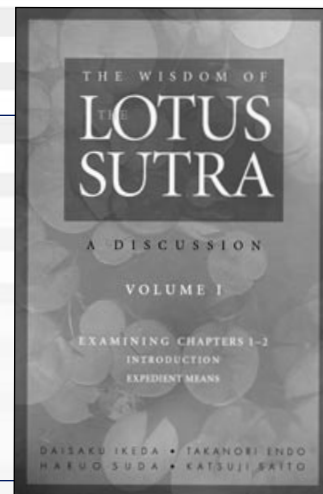
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SOBUKA Creating the Highest Value

F R O M T H E G E N E R A L D I R E C T O R

Greetings to the readers of Living Buddhism

I receive many reports from members throughout the country, and I am so happy to hear of the efforts and accomplishments of so many of you. Thank you for these messages.

Recently, SGI President Ikeda has been encouraging us about the development of our American SGI organization. As I pondered his messages, I realized that he has been reiterating three essential points. He has asked us to support Soka University of America; for each of us to take personal responsibility for the Soka Spirit efforts, the actions to understand and protect the essential spirit of the Soka Gakkai organization and the purity of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism; and to dedicate ourselves to support the growth of each individual member. In discussing these points with Matilda Buck, our SGI-USA national women's leader, she termed this last point "Soka Care." I believe that these three points—Soka University of America, Soka Spirit, and Soka Care—illustrate something vital about our SGI organization and how it relates to the principle of *soka*.

We speak often about soka or value creation. This idea comes from the founder and first president of our organization, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. He was an educator, and his idea of value creation was first developed as a pedagogical theory, expressed in the title of the English edition of his work *Education for Creative Living*.

What Mr. Makiguchi's work ultimately expresses is the belief that as humans, our happiness and fulfillment come from how we create value, or how we express our highest creative potential. He discusses this in terms of how a human being progresses from a dependent life, in

which one lives by receiving the efforts of others, to self-reliant living, where one lives through one's own efforts. But the ultimate aim of human growth is a contributive life, where one extends one's efforts to others, and where the private self of either dependent or self-reliant living is expanded to a greater self, which cares about the good of humanity. He writes:

As humans we are born into society. Every one of us should offer his or her services to society for the good of all in the best way individually possible. No one lives a life apart; no occupation arises independent of the needs of others around us. In the rightful order of mutuality, each person, each labor, is part of the whole. Although mere physiological and psychological subsistence might have been enough as far as the individual is concerned, entering into cooperative social living requires taking the ends of individual life and simultaneously applying them as means to the fulfillment of greater common life.¹

Mr. Makiguchi was urging each of us to move beyond the shallow happiness derived from self interest and to develop a deeper happiness based on a life of contribution and meaning. Happiness based solely on taking care of your wants and desires is limited at best. And to the extent that the educational system of Japan at the time taught people that their value as human beings depended on their value as workers and that the aim of life was simply to make a living, education was failing. Mr. Makiguchi developed his theory as a way of reforming education. He felt that the purpose of education is not the transmission of bits of information, but rather, the development of character.

Ultimately, the purpose of education was human happiness, to enable each person to develop his or her highest and best self.

Mr. Makiguchi's theories ultimately led him to the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. In this Buddhist philosophy, he found a practice and a set of principles that naturally produced a life of the highest value. In other words, what he sought through the realm of education—the means to enable people to become happy—he found within the Buddhist practice taught by Nichiren Daishonin. Therefore, the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai—the Society for Value-creating Education—became, after World War II, the Soka Gakkai—the Society for Value Creation.

Value creation means to create value where we are. It means to transform suffering into happiness; to change difficult circumstances into situations in which we develop our character. By transforming our lives, we can contribute to a transformation of our families, communities and society as a whole.

The principle of value creation is understandable when we think of it in terms of our lives. But as I pondered President Ikeda's recent guidance about developing our American organization by taking responsibility for supporting Soka University of America, Soka Spirit and Soka Care, I was thinking about how our institutions express this concept of value creation.

When we talk about "Soka Spirit," we are talking about the heritage and purpose of our SGI organization, so this is nothing other than cherishing and protecting the SGI and its members. What does it mean to have a "Soka Society"—an organization for value creation? What does it mean to be preparing to open a "Soka University"—a university dedicated to the ideal of creating value?

Soka University of America and Soka Gakkai International—USA: These two entities—one in the realm of education and one in the realm of religion—are the physical expressions of the principle of value creation. To put it another way, though the two institutions are separate, with distinct and different missions, both seek to create a structure for individuals to use in realizing their highest potential. Value creation for the individual means to move from a life of minor value, based only on satisfying one's individual desires, to a contributive life of great value. Similarly, Soka University of America and SGI-USA are not closed worlds that only concern themselves with creating value

for Buddhists, but are rather engaged with the world, and are concerned with developing people who can address the various problems which face our society.

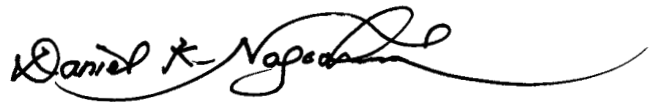
If Soka University and Soka Spirit are focused on value creation, then the idea of Soka Care is at the heart of all our endeavors. Speaking as the general director of our organization, I am strongly convinced that the happiness and development of each person are the first and most important aims of our organization.

In *The New Human Revolution*, volume 8, President Ikeda writes:

Guidance is not by any means an easy thing.... But it is also an opportunity to train yourself. In assisting and nurturing others, you will grow. This difficult process is also true Buddhist practice.

Personal encouragement through home visits is what built the Soka Gakkai's network of faith and trust. Just as a mighty tree is supported by a vast network of roots sinking deep and wide into the earth, the accumulated efforts of personal guidance at the grass-roots level is what supports Soka Gakkai. (NHR vol. 8, chapters 2, 4. Translation tentative.)

The care of each individual member constitutes the roots of our organization. Our collective efforts in the realms of peace, culture and education only create value when they are based on the joy of faith and joy of life of each person. As individuals, our correct Buddhist practice is one that does not limit itself to the achievement of our own, narrow—and ultimately shallow—definition of personal happiness. Instead, it is through the dynamic interdependence of self and others, of the individual and society that Buddhism elucidates, that we can experience genuine happiness and fulfillment as human beings.



Daniel K. Nagashima
SGI-USA General Director

1. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, *Education for Creative Living*, ed. Dayle M. Bethel, trans. Alfred Birnbaum (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press) 1989.

The Oneness of **BODY and MIND**

The Greek philosopher Anaxagoras (500–426 B.C.) envisioned a principle called mind that provides matter with its order. He viewed all reality as dualistic—of two—consisting of mind and matter.

Rene Descartes, the seventeenth-century French philosopher and mathematician who famously observed, “I think, therefore I am” (Latin: *Cogito, ergo sum*), drew a strict distinction between mind and body. To Descartes, mind was an immaterial substance responsible for rational thought, imagination, feeling and will. Body was of the material realm. All matter was subject completely to the laws of physics, except for the body which was also influenced by the human mind, or will, though distinct from it. Descartes’ mind–body dualism laid the groundwork in Western thought for the separation of theology and science, of materialism and spiritualism, of body and mind. It supported the distinction in science between physical phenomena or illnesses and those of a mental or emotional nature.

The idea of body–mind separation still exists to some degree, but it is a distinction that has begun to blur as science and medicine have progressed. The discipline of mind–body medicine, until only recently rejected by mainstream medicine, is now becoming part of that mainstream.

Within the last quarter century it has been established that certain kinds of cells in blood and body, called “Natural Killer” cells (NK), play an important role in fighting cancers and virus infections by killing the abnormal or infected cells. An increase in the body’s NK level means a higher probability of defeating such diseases. There is growing evidence that mood and temperament affect the concentration of NK cells in a per-

son’s system. A recent Indiana State University study titled “The Effect of Mirthful Laughter on Stress and Natural Killer Cell Cytotoxicity” confirms the effect of humor and laughter in reducing stress and boosting the body’s ability to fight disease. Its implications are stated as follows: “This study indicates that laughter has the potential to reduce stress and temporarily improve NK activity in a sample of healthy women. As low NK activity has been linked to poorer prognosis, humor may be a useful complementary therapy in the care of persons with cancer, but more research is needed to determine the effect of laughter on NK activity in persons with cancer” (see: <http://web.indstate.edu/nurs/mary/html-show>). Such research seems to confirm pioneering work on the effects of humor on health done by Dr. Norman Cousins and others, and attests to the growing scientific awareness of the mind–body connection.

We also see many clear day-to-day examples of the connection between mind and body. For instance, when we are surprised or frightened, our faces turn pale. This is because fear causes blood vessels to constrict, decreasing the flow of blood to the skin. Also, emotional stress is thought to contribute to the formation of certain kinds of digestive ulcers—lesions of the lining of the stomach, duodenum or intestine.

The above examples illustrate how a spiritual change can bring about a physical change. But even more obvious are examples in which a physical change brings about a change in the mind or spirit. A simple toothache can change our entire outlook, making us irritable or even surly. Another obvious example of a physical change having a spiritual effect is the drinking of alcohol. A chemical that directly affects the body’s metabolism, alcohol can make an otherwise shy person

This suggests that the highest principle of Buddhism is the reality that we can manifest in our beings, in our bodies and minds, the fundamental enlightenment inherent to all life. This fundamental enlightenment is also called the Buddha nature, the Mystic Law, or Myoho-enge-kyo. When we devote ourselves to this Law through Buddhist practice, we tap into the source of cosmic life-force from which the physical and spiritual aspects of life arise. In this way, we enrich, harmonize and revitalize our physical and spiritual selves, our bodies and our minds.

outgoing, or even confrontational.

An even more direct example is that of physical injury to the brain, which can cause a person to undergo a complete and permanent change in temperament and behavior, depending on what specific part of the brain is damaged.

The fact is that every human feeling, every thought, has some sort of physical manifestation—even if only a subtle electro-chemical change in the brain or nervous system.

The “oneness of body and mind” is a core concept in Buddhism. “Body” here indicates physical phenomena, literally, that which can be seen. “Mind” means spiritual and mental phenomena, which are invisible. “Oneness” does not mean that body and mind are absolutely identical. It is a translation of a Chinese term meaning “not two,” or non-duality. This is itself a contraction of a longer term meaning “two but not two.” This means that, while body and mind—physical and spiritual—are clearly two distinct classes of phenomena, they are both aspects of the same thing. They are both rooted in the common source of life itself, in the ultimate reality or law of life.

In the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” Nichiren Daishonin states that the word “Nam” of “Nam-myoho-enge-kyo,” which derives from the Sanskrit language, is translated into Chinese as two characters, one meaning “devotion” and the other, “life.” He further states that “devotion” indicates the physical aspect, or body, and “life” indicates the spiritual aspect, or “mind.” Then he continues, “This oneness of body and mind is the single ultimate principle” (*Gosho*

Zenshu, p. 708) This suggests that the highest principle of Buddhism is the reality that we can manifest in our beings, in our bodies and minds, the fundamental enlightenment inherent to all life. This fundamental enlightenment is also called the Buddha nature, the Mystic Law, or Myoho-enge-kyo. When we devote ourselves to this Law through Buddhist practice, we tap into the source of cosmic life-force from which the physical and spiritual aspects of life arise. In this way, we enrich, harmonize and revitalize our physical and spiritual selves, our bodies and our minds.

In his writing “Opening the Eyes of Wooden and Painted Images,” Nichiren Daishonin states, “One’s thoughts are expressed in one’s voice. The mind represents the spiritual aspect, and the voice, the physical aspect. A person can know another’s mind by listening to the voice. This is because the physical aspect reveals the spiritual aspect” (WND, 86)

When we seriously pray for and feel concern for others (mind), our words and actions (body) toward them can uplift their spirits (mind), which can in turn lead to a positive change in their physical health and also in their own words and actions (body). At the same time, applying our voice and actions in this way enhances and develops our own spiritual state. When we continue to chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with a strong prayer for our own happiness and that of others, and consistently speak and act to achieve those ends, we are living the principle of oneness of body and mind.

By Shin Yatomi, SGI-USA vice Study Department chief, partly based on *Yasashii Kyogaku* (Easy Buddhist Study), published by the Seikyo Press in 1994.

Be Neither Influenced nor Frightened by Obstacles

Over years of practice, particular passages from the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin have become favorites of those who practice his Buddhism. This series introduces some of those passages and the people whose lives they have impacted, proving that it is, indeed, a living Buddhism.

BY FRED ZAITSU, PUBLISHER

The doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life revealed in the fifth volume of Great Concentration and Insight is especially profound. If you propagate it, devils will arise without fail. If they did not, there would be no way of knowing that this is the correct teaching. One passage from the same volume reads, "As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils¹ emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere.... One should be neither influenced nor frightened by them. If one falls under their influence, one will be led into the paths of evil. If one is frightened by them, one will be prevented from practicing the correct teaching." This statement not only applies to me but also is a guide for my disciples. Reverently make this teaching your own and transmit it as an axiom of faith for future generations. ("Letter to the Brothers," *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 501)

Background: This letter was written in 1275 to two brothers who had converted to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Their father was a loyal follower of the Shingon priest Ryokan and opposed his sons' beliefs for more than twenty years before finally converting to the Daishonin's Buddhism himself.



The Ikegami brothers had converted to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and were consequently facing their father's strong opposition, a troubling dilemma.

The Daishonin explains to them that when we embark on the path to enlightenment, we will face opposition. By continuing our faith, however, we can overcome any obstacle. I know this to be true because the same thing happened to me.

Boxing was my favorite sport in college. It was a time in my youth when I felt invincible, full of hope and excited about my future.

This was before I became a member of the Soka Gakkai. I actually wanted nothing to do with the Soka Gakkai or any religion. I felt religion was for the weak. I was renting a room from Soka Gakkai members, and I rejected their repeated attempts to interest me in the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin. My father, who was supporting me through college, was also very much against the Soka Gakkai.

My family belonged to the Minobu sect of Nichiren Buddhism, which followed neither the teachings nor the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin.

I was soon to learn some important life lessons. First, and most devastating, concerned my health. I was diagnosed with a herniated disk in my back. I had injured it boxing. I couldn't sit for very long, I couldn't stand for very long, and I couldn't even lie down without excruciating pain. When my doctor said I needed surgery, my whole world seemed to collapse. My feeling of invincibility was shattered. I learned that no one is invincible. I was suddenly very interested in the words of my landlords concerning Buddhism and I asked them if I could receive the Gohonzon.

You may wonder how encountering obstacles could be a source of peace and comfort. But the truth of the matter is that through struggling against and overcoming difficulties, we can transform our destiny and attain Buddhahood. Confronting adversity, therefore, represents peace and comfort.

I began practicing and attending Gakkai activities. Almost immediately, I felt better. When I went back to the same doctor who had suggested surgery, he found no evidence that I still needed it. Everything seemed bright and hopeful again. This was my first benefit from practicing Buddhism. Then came my first obstacle and my next lesson in life.

When my father found out that I had joined the Soka Gakkai, he was furious. My father had been paying for my tuition and rent as I furthered my education. If I didn't quit the Soka Gakkai immediately, he said he would stop supporting me. And he did. Very soon, I was out of money for food, my rent was overdue, and the college was asking about my tuition. Once again, my world seemed to be falling apart. The joy I had experienced in the beginning of my practice was shrinking. I sought the advice of a youth leader with many years of experience.

This was when I heard about "Letter to the Brothers" and the quote: "As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge in confusing form, vying with one another to interfere.... One should be neither influenced nor frightened by them."

My youth leader impressed this upon me: "Don't be afraid. This is proof that you are practicing correctly. Courageously continue your practice and Gakkai activities."

He explained that the father of the Ikegami brothers threatened to disown them if they did not abandon their practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism. I couldn't believe that the very same thing was happening to me. The "Letter to the Brothers" was Nichiren Daishonin's encouragement to them and clarification of the nature of such opposition. I felt he was writing to me, seven hundred years later! My leader told me: "You mustn't be afraid! Don't give up!"

The purpose of obstacles is to strengthen our faith. This is the great lesson I learned. I continued my practice of Buddhism in the Gakkai, struggling to support

myself. It was in the pressure cooker of this obstacle that I felt my life change—that I came to understand the Gohonzon a little bit. In this sense, my father was acting as a good friend to the development of my faith.

Finally, my father understood that I was not going to quit, and his attitude changed. He supported my practice, and it was wonderful. I had followed the Daishonin's words and had seen—firsthand—that they are true. If I had cut back in my practice or quit, who knows what might have happened. Toward the end of his life, my father and I chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo together.

Obstacles are like the rushing air that lifts an airplane or waves that propel a surfer. Through our faith in the Gohonzon, obstacles open up a new world to us.

In the book *For Today and Tomorrow*, SGI President Ikeda states: "In the 'Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,' the Daishonin says, 'One should regard meeting obstacles as true peace and comfort' (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 750). You may wonder how encountering obstacles could be a source of peace and comfort. But the truth of the matter is that through struggling against and overcoming difficulties, we can transform our destiny and attain Buddhahood. Confronting adversity, therefore, represents peace and comfort."

By following the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin to never be swayed or frightened by problems, we can always overcome them. And the encouragement of our fellow SGI members and guidance of our mentor President Ikeda is invaluable. □

1. Three obstacles and four devils—Various obstacles and hindrances to the practice of Buddhism. The three obstacles are: 1) the obstacle of earthly desires; 2) the obstacle of karma, which may refer to opposition from one's spouse or children; and 3) the obstacle of retribution, also obstacles caused by one's superiors, such as rulers or parents. The four devils are: 1) the hindrance of the five components; 2) the hindrance of earthly desires; 3) the hindrance of death (because untimely death obstructs one's practice of Buddhism or because the premature death of another practitioner causes doubts); and 4) the hindrance of the devil king.

CONVERSATIONS ON EDUCATION WITH FRIENDS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

For the future of our children (3)

Showing Children Love and Trust



From right to left: Soka Gakkai International President Daisaku Ikeda, SGI-USA Women's Leader Matilda Buck and SGI-USA Youth Division Senior Advisor Ed Feasel. Their dialogue was carried in the April issue of *Todai* magazine.

A Father's Love

IKEDA: The other day I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Zhou Haiyi. He is the son of the great Chinese literary icon, Chou Shu-jen, known by his pen name, Lu Xun. Mr. Zhou is currently advisor to the Lu Xun Museum in Beijing. In a lecture during his visit to Japan, Mr. Zhou shared a recollection of his father in response to a question from the audience. Lu Xun would take pains each day to create an atmosphere in which his son could study comfortably. While an elementary school student, Mr. Zhou passed a test with the highest score of any student in his school. He then showed his father the grade he had received. He refrained from giving his son a typical parental response such as admonishing him to remain the best in his class. He worried about the burden it would put on his son if he pressured him to maintain a top grade. His was the compassionate love of a father who simply wanted his child to be at ease with his studies.

BUCK: Lu Xun showed his humanity this way—he was concerned with the whole child, not just results.

FEASEL: More than simply wanting his child to excel in his studies, he wished him to develop into an outstanding human being.

This is why Lu Xun is regarded as the “soul of the Chinese people.” But this kind of warm connection between parent and child is being lost in today's world. For instance, the tradition of gathering happily as a family around the dinner table is changing. It's increasingly the case that children eat meals alone.

IKEDA: This is becoming a problem in Japan, as well; there is even a new word in Japanese to describe it, meaning “solitary dining.” It conveys the image of a child quietly eating alone in front of the television set, rather than while enjoying pleasant conversation with the family.

BUCK: In the U.S., many families eat their meals while watching TV. I think the number is particularly high among those of Ed's generation. Some can't sit calmly and enjoy a meal unless the television is on. For working mothers especially, meal times provide a precious opportunity for communication, a valuable time to spend with their children. But I know that for busy mothers who



GREGORY NAKASUJI

SGI President Ikeda greets youth at the 1st SGI-USA Youth General Meeting on March 14, 1993.

mysterious. What impressed me more than anything was how bright and lively the members looked. Everyone talked of the benefit and happiness they had gained through their Buddhist practice. Someone even claimed to have found a lost cat through chanting! As the meeting drew to a close, the emcee suddenly asked, “Is there anyone who would like to join?” I immediately raised my hand and said, “I would!”

hold down full-time jobs meals can often be on the run. Even if they are too busy to cook, they can still talk with their children in the car on the way to the drive-thru or maybe prepare a simple meal together.

IKEDA: Yes, I agree. No matter how busy we are, it is important to be resourceful and think of ways to spend time with our children.

BUCK: Speaking of family communication, our family spends time together each summer at the beach in La Jolla, a place where I spent my childhood.

It’s a well-known resort town, about fifteen minutes by freeway north of San Diego. It is also a special place for me because it is where I first met you, President Ikeda. I have formed many important memories there.

IKEDA: People with a place they call home—a place to which they can always return—are happy. In this

sense, we can say that the family functions as a spiritual home for human beings.

Embracing Buddhism to Build a Happy Family

BUCK: My reason for joining the SGI was to create a happy family. Originally, I had no interest in Buddhism at all. From time to time, the owner of a clothing store where I shopped, who was an SGI member, would talk to me about the Daishonin’s Buddhism, but I didn’t listen very seriously. One day, however, I took a friend of mine who was interested in Buddhism to one of this person’s SGI discussion meetings. My husband came along, too. The image I had of Buddhism had been of some sort of Oriental mysticism, but this SGI meeting was totally different. I wasn’t sure if this really was Buddhism because it didn’t seem esoteric and

FEASEL: Your friend and your husband must have been surprised!

BUCK: They were. More than anything, the bright and happy demeanor of the members had touched my heart. If I do this practice, I thought, then maybe I can change my life. At the time, something was missing from my life—I felt empty. I had been raised in an environment that was anything but happy, and my first marriage had failed. With two children from that marriage, I met and married my present husband, Carl. I was now financially and physically secure, but something was still lacking. This sudden security, rather than bringing me peace, seemed to have the opposite effect. I began to feel more anxious and more critical. At the deepest level of my life I wasn’t able to accept the love and security my husband brought me. I wanted to be

happy, have happy children, but in the conflicted environment I was creating, it seemed impossible. For this reason, I found the way of life and philosophy of the SGI members I encountered very attractive. They told me I could change myself and create a happy family. Today I deeply realize how correct my decision to join that day was.

IKEDA: So that's how you joined! We never know what kind of connection may lead a person to embrace this Buddhism. Your serious search for family happiness may well have led you to encounter those members. We can never gain true happiness by only pursuing our own well-being.

FEASEL: I think the traditional image of the family is changing, as are modes of family living. For various reasons, single-parent households are increasing. Divorce has become more commonplace in the U.S., and birth out of wedlock is by no means rare. As a result, the percentage of single mothers is surprisingly large.

BUCK: The number of families in which both parents work is growing as well. In many families, both parents must work to support the family. In America, we have many mothers who are raising children alone and working full time.

All in all, there is less time available for parents to spend with their children. When parents come home from work, they have little energy left. Sometimes even a small amount of "quality time" with their kids is hard to find.

Feeling burdened by guilt about this, some may tend to try to compensate by spoiling their children. On the other extreme, they feel pressured by their circumstances and may become unnecessarily strict.

IKEDA: I see. I think the same tendency is developing in Japan. The family does not exist apart from society. It is natural that when society changes, family life also changes.

Some may long for the past, trying to turn old family values into ideals for the present. Because society is changing, the pursuit of past ideals won't get us far. I don't think that the importance of the family will ever change. Rather, in a turbulent society, the family's function as a grounding point—as an anchor in stormy seas—becomes increasingly important.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. — Acting for People's Happiness

BUCK: Television is one thing that was never part of family life in the past, but plays a big role now. For better or for worse, I think that the impact of the media today, especially the electronic media, is stronger than ever. I believe it influences family life. Watching television causes us to tune out our real environment, isolating the self. This isolated self identifies with images on the screen. For example, women portrayed on television are most often young, thin and beautiful. They seem free to pursue their personal wants and desires. But these aspects are overemphasized. Continually exposed to such images, an average girl or woman might think, "I want to be like her," and even feel herself inadequate. Many people long for the kind of romantic, exciting, or opulent lifestyles they see on TV or in the movies.

IKEDA: I think it's fine to watch television from time to time; there is much we can learn from doing so. However, much of what it depicts is an illusion. Influenced by such false images, one cannot live wisely. The

media tends to focus on people with wealth and fame. True human worth, is not found in material wealth or popularity. Everyone wants to live a healthy and prosperous life, but we should not forget that the highest form of value is a richness of heart. How have we lived our lives? How have we contributed to the world—what kind of role have we played? Though they may remain unknown and may never live in a big, expensive home, those who sincerely and honestly expend their energies for the well being of others will accrue genuine treasures of the heart. Such people will enjoy true happiness. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the American warrior of human rights, spoke about how he wished to be remembered in the event of his death. He did not ask that his winning of the Nobel Prize or hundreds of other awards be mentioned at his funeral. He simply said, "I'd like somebody to mention that day that Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to give his life serving others . . . I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity . . . If I can help somebody as I pass along, if I can cheer somebody with a word of song, if I can show somebody he's traveling wrong, then my living will not be in vain."

A tape-recording of these words was played at his funeral, deeply moving those who were hearing them for a second time.

How much have we loved others? To what extent have we helped people? That is the only value that remains at the end of our lives. Dr. King's words teach us this. "When you light the way for others, the way ahead will be lit for you"—this is what Buddhism teaches. We must not pursue happiness only for ourselves. We must take action for others' happiness. That is the way of life of a Bodhisattva, which Buddhism expounds. All our efforts for others go

to create happiness for ourselves. It is happiness for self and others. That is also what real education teaches, and it is why those who dedicate their lives to education invariably glow with wisdom and nobility. I have always advocated that special recognition be given those teachers who have fostered many outstanding young people.

Students Must Not Be Prejudged

FEASEL: When you visited the United States in 1990, President Ikeda, an educator’s group was formed in SGI-USA. Today many able educators who belong to that group are contributing substantially to their field and to their students’ development. One such individual is Maura Malarcher, an SGI-USA member in New York. New York City can be a difficult and even dangerous place to teach. Maura has had the encouraging experience of achieving great success with two of her most troubled students. Both of these young men had been labeled and treated as problem students. The parents, were at their wits end wondering what could be done, but Maura did not lose hope. She talked with her students repeatedly and kept trying to encourage them. At first, they didn’t respond; their hearts remained closed. But gradually, they began to trust her. Then, one of the two students had to stay at home due to an irregular heartbeat. Maura gave him her home phone number and began to communicate with him so he could continue his studies at home. In the United States it is very unusual for a teacher to give a student her home phone number. As a result, the young man called Maura frequently and when he returned to school he continued to work hard and do better, even staying



Maura Malarcher (left) at a diversity meeting at the SGI-USA New York Culture Center.

KATHLEEN CONDON

after school to get help.

BUCK: She really cared about the boy’s future.

FEASEL: Yes, and the other student, as a result of Maura’s encouragement and his own efforts, continued to improve in his school work to the point where he received an “A” on one of his tests. He asked Maura to sign his test paper so his parents would believe it. Through this experience, Maura learned the value of never giving up on anyone.

She said, “We must not judge students based only upon their outward behavior or on test scores. We must not view students with prejudice. Also, when students get into trouble, we must never just leave them to themselves. A teacher must always be close to her students, and be ready to warmly approach and encourage them.”

IKEDA: She is a wonderful teacher. A school is far more than just a building. A school is its teachers who altruistically devote themselves for the good of their students. Only human beings can develop human beings.

This was the theme of a speech I gave at Columbia University’s Teachers College in 1996.

FEASEL: Maura is a graduate of Teachers College. She attended your speech that day, and was delighted to see her former professors listening attentively to your words. She was moved by your definition of a global citizen, which you shared that day:

“I have many friends who could be considered quite ordinary citizens, but who possess an inner nobility; who have never traveled beyond their native place, yet who are genuinely concerned for the peace and prosperity of the world,” you said. You pointed out that such people, who care about the well-being of even those they have never seen or met, are genuine global citizens. Maura has been striving to raise true global citizens in the classes she teaches.

IKEDA: Excellent! It’s gratifying to know that. Maura’s struggles will definitely bear fruit in the 21st century. Education can never be



Matilda Buck's class in May of 1954. Mr. Boswell center, Matilda first row far left.

accomplished through technique alone. It always comes about through an interaction of the heart—the spirit of one person sparking the spirit of another.

Educators Can Awaken Students' Great Potential

FEASEL: The current national leader of the SGI-USA high-school division, Steve Mortan, is a high school teacher. Now 26 years old, he teaches at a school in one of the most difficult areas of Southern California. It is a place where poverty and violence are the norm. It is also where Steve grew up. Actually, he had an opportunity to work at a school in a relatively affluent and safe area, not that far from where he lives. But he had no desire to work anywhere else. Expressing his deep conviction about this, he said, "Somehow, I wanted to repay the debt of gratitude I owe to the community that raised me. Because I grew up in the same envi-

ronment, I felt I could relate to the students there, that I could understand how they feel."

IKEDA: The most important quality for an educator is the ability to understand the students' hearts. This is a point that both Mr. Makiguchi and Mr. Toda emphasized and they themselves put into practice as educators.

FEASEL: As a teacher, Steve always tries to bear in mind something that he learned from you, President Ikeda. It was years ago, when you visited Los Angeles in 1990. Steve, who was then a high-school student of sixteen, attended a youth division meeting where you spoke. He remembered that everyone seemed tense and nervous as they awaited your arrival. But when you entered the room, you addressed everyone in a warm and engaging manner, dispelling the rigid atmosphere. Expressing your great expectations for the young people present, you told them again and again, "You are the leaders of the future!" Steve cannot forget what he felt at that time.

Whenever he interacts with students, he puts formality aside and tries to convey his heartfelt hopes for their future, just as you did for him on that day.

BUCK: Students who encounter teachers like Maura and Steve are truly fortunate. I, too had a teacher who stands out in my memory. That was Mr. Boswell, who taught me in the fifth and sixth

grades. As I've mentioned before, my father died soon after I was born. We were never well off financially, and though my mother loved me dearly, she became an alcoholic. There were times when I felt very lonely. Mr. Boswell saw this and found ways to encourage me. My mother would still be at work when my classes were over. Understanding my situation, Mr. Boswell often stayed after school and helped me improve in sports, as a father might have done. Sometimes he would buy some snacks and share them with me. In the U.S. it is rare for teachers to visit students at home, but Mr. Boswell, concerned about our living situation, came by to see how we were doing. He always listened well to what I had to say, and sometimes told me about his life, too. More than a teacher, he was a good friend. "You are not insignificant. You never have to be alone! You are someone very important, precious and special!" This was Mr. Boswell's message to me. His care and guidance during that critical time in my childhood

made a great difference in my life.

IKEDA: He could not have done this without deep concern and love for his student. Because this was his heart, he could awaken your self-respect. Children who are overwhelmed with suffering tend to lack self-confidence; they lose sight of the magnificent treasure that exists within them. If left to themselves, they may become mean-spirited and self-destructive, eventually engaging in behavior that is harmful to themselves and others. Because they do not understand the preciousness of their own lives, they cannot respect the value of others' lives. The greatness of our lives; the unfathomable potential we each possess—it is the essential mission of education to make children aware of this, to awaken them to it.

A Single Mother's Hope for Her Children's Growth and Success

BUCK: I wish I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Boswell again and thank him for all he did for me. If he is still alive today, he'll be in his eighties. In fact, I've asked a friend who is familiar with the Internet to try to locate him.

IKEDA: It would be great if you could meet him again. Matilda, do you use the Internet yourself?

BUCK: No, I'm not good at all with computers. Among the national leaders of the SGI-USA, I may be the only one who doesn't have a computer and can't use e-mail. I'm afraid I'm better at cooking or working in my garden than using a computer. As a matter of fact, I've just used our garden for a fund-raising event. I live in Brentwood (a suburb of the city of Los Angeles between Santa

Monica and Beverly Hills), and in our community there is a program by which the public can view private gardens. Tickets are sold to those who wish to tour the gardens of about five homes and the proceeds from these ticket sales are donated to charity. Our family garden was selected for the program, and last year more than 400 people came to see it. My husband Carl's vegetable garden was the highlight of the tour. It's something I never could have imagined when I was a child and it makes me happy to think that my garden, which I love so much, is serving some purpose. In this case, the proceeds went to the Los Angeles Children's Hospital.

IKEDA: That's wonderful! The culture of charity in America seems to be more deeply rooted than in Japan.

FEASEL: I'd like to share the experience of another SGI-USA member, Veronica Ehrenreich. She has overcome many obstacles as a single mother and succeeded in raising her children to be outstanding individuals. Veronica has three boys, Ian, who is 20; Ryan, 19; and Kevan, 11. She had the two older boys with her first husband. It was when she was pregnant with her third son, Kevan, that the father left her alone to care for the baby and the other two boys from her previous marriage.

Struggling financially, Veronica moved from Los Angeles to Sacramento, California, where the cost of living was lower. There she lived with her children in a trailer home. Veronica wanted her sons to grow into capable individuals who could contribute substantially to kosen-rufu. Her dream was to send her sons to the prestigious Stanford University. However, the public schools in the area where they lived



Steve Morton

were not the greatest academically. She was determined to get her sons the best education, whatever sacrifice she would have to make. She found out that the private school with the lowest tuition in the area was a Catholic high school, and she enrolled her two eldest sons, Ian and Ryan, there. The brothers had some difficulties initially. They were sometimes teased because they were poorer than other students and because they were Buddhists. It was around that time, in 1993, that you, President Ikeda, came to San Francisco. This was the occasion on which the SGI-USA high school and junior high school divisions were formed. I was also appointed as the first high school division leader at that time. Ian and Ryan both attended that meeting.

Nourished by a Mother's Confidence

IKEDA: That time represented a historic new beginning for the SGI-USA.

FEASEL: Yes, it did. Veronica participated in the meeting, too, in a supporting role. She was actually one of those on hand at the entrance to the San Francisco Culture Center to greet you when you arrived. She



STEPHANIE SYDNEY

Carl and Matilda Buck, taking a break from work in their garden.

then entered the meeting place right behind you. Veronica shared with me her memory of that day: “When President Ikeda arrived at the entrance, a number of children, cute boys and girls between the ages of four and twelve, were there to greet him. President Ikeda then bent down so that he could speak to them at their eye level. Looking directly into each child’s eyes, he politely greeted them saying, “All of you, thank you! I will never forget you!” I was very moved to see the interaction between him and the children. President Ikeda then entered the auditorium where many junior high school and high school students were waiting. The first thing he said to them was, ‘Your father’s here!’”

This was exactly how I felt, too. I was

very happy to be there with my two sons.”

BUCK: To have a teacher or mentor with whom you can share your worries when you are faced with life’s bitterness, and who can offer you direction and encouragement when you are confused—someone who helps you live for an ideal—this is truly to have a “father of the heart.”

FEASEL: I agree. From that day on, the two brothers confidently participated in SGI-USA high-school division activities. And in school, their classmates and teachers began to really show respect for the family’s efforts. Eventually Ian, the eldest son, was accepted at Stanford. There were still many problems, including financial difficulties and Ian sustaining a serious leg injury. However, they beautifully

overcame each challenge, and finally Ryan, too, was accepted at Stanford.

BUCK: It’s hard enough to send one child to a school like Stanford, but to have two go is really astounding!

FEASEL: I asked Ian and Ryan when it was that they first decided to attend Stanford. This was their answer: “Ever since we can remember, it has been our mother’s dream that we attend Stanford. But more than a dream, it was her confidence that we would go. Our circumstances were very hard, but because our mother had such confidence, we became confident too. Neither of us is attending Stanford because we are particularly smart. What we’ve learned is that when there is someone who really believes in you, it’s easy for you to believe in yourself.”

IKEDA: That's right! Believing in a child is what enables that child to believe in his or her own potential. The love and trust of people in the child's environment help bring forth the child's inherent capability. In this connection, I once offered six points of advice to SGI-USA concerning what we should teach our children in the home.

BUCK: Yes, I think there were six points:

1. Faith is a life-long matter. For school-aged children, faith is expressed in their studies, which are most important.
2. Find ways to get together and talk with your children.
3. Parents should never argue in front of their children.
4. Both parents should not scold children at the same time.
5. Be fair. Don't compare one child to others.
6. Make sure your children can understand and respect your beliefs, your way of life and your dedication. We must make a conscious effort to verbalize and communicate our thoughts and feelings to them.

These points are easy for me to understand because they are clear and practical. I think the parents in SGI-USA are trying to put them into practice.

Bright Hope for the Future

FEASEL: Veronica also made the following point: "It is very hard for a single woman to support and raise a family. There are a great many problems. It's easy to lose sight of your goals. If that happens, it's not a simple thing to put yourself back on track. I have been able to persevere until now because of this faith,

because of President Ikeda's guidance and encouragement, and because of my fellow members—our warm SGI family."

BUCK: I really understand how she feels. Since I became a member of the SGI, there have been many people who have shared my worries and struggles, people who have encouraged me and whom I have encouraged. What makes me the happiest is when I hear a fellow member's experience of challenging and winning over a problem or overcoming suffering. America today is facing a variety of problems. When we look at the news, we often come away with a very bleak feeling. But at SGI activities, I meet people who are experiencing some of the problems that are portrayed on the news, yet they are winning. Through their efforts in faith, they are making a difference. This gives me hope for the future of humanity. Our members are not only overcoming their own problems, they are also reaching out to help others.

FEASEL: Because of his experience with his injury, Ian is majoring in medicine at Stanford. He hopes one day to work to relieve people's suffering as a medical doctor.

Ryan, as a freshman, has decided to study computer science. Both are active members of the SGI-USA student division. In 1993, when the junior high and high school divisions were formed, you said the following, President Ikeda: "I believe that the SGI-USA junior high and high school divisions will give birth to many humanistic leaders who will shine like glistening stars. I strongly believe this!" Ian and Ryan are each an irreplaceable shimmering star in a future galaxy of capable people.



Ian Ehrenreich (far right), 20, a sophomore at Stanford University with his mother, Veronica, and two brothers, Ryan, 19, and Kevan, 11, outside Wilbur Hall dormitory at Stanford.

IKEDA: This makes me very happy. Please convey my best regards to that family. The efforts of the two boys to attend the college of their choice are truly admirable. Even more praiseworthy is their having learned the spirit to work for the good of society and for people's happiness. This, even more than attending a top-rate university, is a victory for education. Because of this, their mother has won. It is the growth of young people like them that gives light to a world now veiled in darkness. This is what makes a mother smile; it is her happiness and her victory in life!

As Matilda just mentioned, the darkness of today's world is deep. However, this is where America's challenge lies as a model for the entire world. The key to winning this challenge is education. To the extent that we give children our love and our trust, they will shine with brilliance and the world will be a brighter place. For the sake of SGI-USA's and America's future, I am praying that you, Ed, Matilda, and all of the members of SGI-USA will play an even more active role in this regard. □

An unconventional teacher from northern Japan took on Japan's educational establishment and the military government of World War II. This led to his arrest and imprisonment. He was the first president of what would become the Soka Gakkai International, which has twelve million members in 163 countries, and his educational philosophy is the inspiration for the Soka School system.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi **FOUNDER OF SOKA: VALUE-CREATING EDUCATION**

A Revolutionary Who Dedicated His Life to the Happiness of Students

**The SGI originated
in the heart and
mind of a courageous
champion of
human rights**

By Andrew Gebert and
Anthony George

Andrew Gebert is a translator and researcher at the Institute of Oriental Philosophy. Anthony George is a South African writer living in Tokyo.



Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, founder of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value-creating Education Society), forerunner of the present-day Soka Gakkai (Value-creating Society).

SEIKYO PRESS

Introduction

When, on November 18, 1930, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda published the first volume of *Soka Kyoiku Taikei* (The System of Value-creating Pedagogy), the name Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Value-creating Education Society) was used officially for the first time as the pedagogy's publisher (Todai Hokekyo, 49). Thus, an organization, although only nominal at that stage, came into being. By 1941, the society, promulgating religious and educational reform, had a broad-based membership of 3,000 (Todai Hokekyo, 56). By the end of World War II, Makiguchi was dead and the organization was again nominal, consisting now of only Josei Toda. Fired by a fierce determination to realize his mentor's ideals and vision, Toda began the work of rebuilding the organization, which he renamed the Soka Gakkai (Value-creating Society). By the time of his death in 1958, Toda had constructed a vibrantly growing organization with a membership of more than 750,000 households. His successor, Daisaku Ikeda, expanded the scope of the organization's activities to the fields of culture, education and peace advocacy, while at the same time giving these an international dimension. At present, Soka Gakkai

International members are active in 163 countries and territories.

Soka Gakkai members have designated November 18, 1930 as the founding date of the organization and thus the start of the movement's activities. They likewise look to the ideas and life of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi as inspiration, as an example of a dedicated educator, social reformer and committed Buddhist. An understanding of Makiguchi's philosophical outlook is essential to understanding the subsequent development of the Soka Gakkai in Japan and of the SGI worldwide.

Two years before the publication of the *Pedagogy* in 1928, two other important events occurred. First, Makiguchi was transferred from his post at Shirogane Primary to Niibori Primary, a school that was scheduled for closure the following year (Todai Hokekyo, 26). In this way Makiguchi, whose relations with the educational authorities had always been strained, was effectively driven from the arena of education. 1928 was also the year in which Makiguchi, impressed by his encounter with Sokei Mitani, decided to embrace Nichiren Buddhism (Todai Hokekyo, 42–43).

While Makiguchi must have regarded his forced retirement as a bitterly unfortunate event, this period of his life was a profound turning point for him and the beginning of the realization of his vision of a vast social reform.

Makiguchi's Legacy

One of the key features of the Soka Gakkai's interpretation of Buddhism is found in its this-worldly, pragmatic orientation. The movement encourages practitioners to be fully engaged in their



Makiguchi with his wife, Kuma, November 1941.

daily reality, stressing that the purpose of Buddhist practice is to develop the wisdom, compassion, energy and courage to engage fully and creatively in the challenges and opportunities of daily life. It encourages the perspective that, rather than a transcendent escape from reality, the challenge of living lies in developing the kind of character and strength that can transform reality. These ideas can be traced back to Makiguchi's own philosophy of value creation, which deeply shaped his reception of Buddhist philosophy and religious practice. From this perspective, it is illuminating to explore the synergies between the development of Makiguchi's thought, his encounter with and reception of Nichiren Buddhism, and the subsequent development of the reformist philosophy that he created.

Long before his conversion to Buddhism, Makiguchi was deeply committed to educational and social reforms that would restore the focus of human endeavor to the happiness of real, living individuals rather than to the state or other abstract authorities or goals. The leadership of the

Soka Gakkai has consistently asserted that Makiguchi's interpretation of Buddhism in a this-worldly orientation represents a return to its original spirit and goal of human empowerment and societal transformation. They have been especially forthright in asserting the unique contributions of the Soka Gakkai in reinvigorating Nichiren Buddhism and giving it relevance in the modern world since the organization's decisive split with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood in 1991.

Makiguchi's Early Life and Environment

Makiguchi was born on June 6, 1871, in a small, impoverished fishing village on the Sea of Japan, in isolated Niigata Prefecture. The name of his village, Arahama ("Desolate Beach") suggests the harshness of his early environment (Bethel, 1973, 26). Perhaps Makiguchi's most striking physical feature, from the existing photographs of him, was his stern countenance. However, those who knew him have described him as warm and compassionate. It is likely the difficulties he experienced in his youth and his long association with the less fortunate of Japanese society molded both these qualities in him.

Abandoned by his father at the age of three, he was taken to live with an uncle. The poverty of his adoptive family and the need to work to help support them forced him to give up his education after elementary school.

At the age of fourteen, Makiguchi set off by himself for Hokkaido, which was then a frontier region of Japan. Hokkaido was a center of progressive thought in Japan at that time. Several of the period's most open, internationally oriented thinkers, came

from that region. Among them was the Christian pacifist Kanzo Uchimura (1861–1930) and Inazo Nitobe (1862–1932), who served as under-secretary-general of the League of Nations 1920–27. Makiguchi's thinking likewise bears the stamp of Hokkaido's open, frontier mentality, a strong and often conflicting contrast with the increasingly restrictive nationalism that came to predominate in Japan in the early years of the twentieth century (Yamashita, 148–57).

In Hokkaido, Makiguchi found work as an errand boy with the local police department and attempted to continue his education. Recognizing his talents, his co-workers collected enough money to enable him to enroll in the Hokkaido Normal School, a teacher's training college. Despite the lack of interim education, he graduated in 1893 at the age of twenty-two, and was offered a post in a primary school attached to the college. He held this position for eight years, becoming known for his dedication and approachability. Here he also became increasingly critical of the educational practices of the day, particularly to the extent that he perceived them to be stifling, rather than developing, the creative potential of children (Bethel, 1973, 32).

The Backdrop of Nationalism

Three years before Makiguchi's birth, the Meiji era began and Japan entered a period of frantic learning and absorption from the West in an effort to reconstitute itself as a modern, industrial nation-state. Particularly after its victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), Japan pursued a national policy of imperial expansion, as expressed by the slogan "national wealth and mili-

tary strength." This trend only accelerated with the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05). Throughout this period, education was integral to developing a sense of national identity and fostering citizens committed to realizing the goals of the state (Saito, 774–5).

The Imperial Rescript on Education, issued in 1890, provides an example of how the government actively enforced this political indoctrination. The document instructed Japanese subjects to cultivate loyalty and filial piety toward the imperial household. It portrayed Japan as a unique polity based on the historical bonds of its benevolent rulers and loyal subjects. Certified copies of the Rescript were distributed to schools throughout the country and ceremoniously read at all important school events. Students were required to study and memorize its text for their moral education classes. Kanzo Uchimura's refusal to show adequate respect to the Rescript and his resultant banishment from the teaching profession was an incident that sent shock waves through the world of Japanese education (Yamashita, 158).

Makiguchi's attitude toward the Imperial Rescript on Education was also less than reverential. In *The System of Value-creating Pedagogy*, Makiguchi describes the Rescript as providing only "a minimal moral principle." The context of rising nationalism is key to understanding Makiguchi's active endeavors as an educator and his desire to effect reform. As Bethel states: "Makiguchi's life and educational career must be seen and evaluated against the background of this debate [about education] and its outcome ... his entire educational career was a protest against the production of subjects" (Bethel, 1973, 29).

The Geography of Life and the Idea of World Citizenship

Central to Makiguchi's educational philosophy was the recognition of the need to awaken in students a realization of their interconnectedness with society and the world at large. He posited a three-layered scheme of identity or citizenship, stating that education should develop a sense of belonging and commitment to the community, to the nation and to the world (Makiguchi, 1:227). He later wrote: "Unless the ultimate aim is established, intermediate aims cannot be fixed. Without perceiving the world, one cannot understand the nation. Unless the life of the nation is realized, individual livelihood cannot be secured. Therefore if we are to achieve stability of individual livelihood in every household, that of the nation must first be established. Without the well-being of the world, that of the nation cannot be assured" (Makiguchi, 10:7).

Makiguchi perceived that a key responsibility of education was developing global-minded, responsible people who, while rooted in the local community, could maintain an empathetic engagement with the world. Makiguchi was deeply interested in the study of geography. In particular his interest lay in the interrelationship of people with their physical environments and the effect of this on culture. He believed that by making the study of geography a central point around which the elementary school curriculum could be structured and integrated, many of the problems and shortfalls of education could be overcome (Bethel, 1973, 33).

Accordingly, he began work on a geography book for elementary school teachers. The outcome was the 1903 work, *Jinsei Chirigaku* (The Geography of Human Life). Two years earlier, Makiguchi had been forced to resign from the Hokkaido Normal School in Sapporo, having been held responsible for an apparent breakdown in discipline of a dormitory of boys. There is much reason to believe that Makiguchi, as a junior teacher, was forced to take responsibility for an incident in which he was at most marginally involved (Saito, 765). In any event, his resignation provided Makiguchi with a reason to move to Tokyo, the heart of Japan's intellectual life.

Makiguchi's book is filled with observations that can only be termed remarkable considering the historical setting in which they were written. As mentioned, a central concern of the book is the interrelatedness of human society and the natural world. As such, it has been hailed as a pioneering work of "social ecology" (Murao, 114). The *Geography* critiques many aspects of the nature of the Japanese state, which was increasingly sacralized in the person of the emperor. For example, Makiguchi clearly states his view that the purpose of the state is to enhance the quality of life of its citizens. Here again, we encounter the leitmotif of happiness as the genuine object of human endeavors.

Makiguchi further declares "the freedom and rights of the individual are sacred and inviolable" (Makiguchi, 2:339). Significantly, these are the same words used in the Meiji Constitution of 1889 to describe the person of the emperor. It is statements like this that caused social and literary critic Shoji Saito to describe Makiguchi as a "radical



A letter from Makiguchi to Josei Toda.

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in the original sense of the word" (Saito, 757). It is also meaningful to note that Makiguchi published his ideals about the development of global citizens at the very time that other noted Japanese scholars were actively inciting public enthusiasm for open war with Russia.

The publication of Makiguchi's *Geography* was met with significant acclaim, becoming a standard reference for students preparing to take the government exam for teachers, but even this failed to raise either his material or social prospects.

In the Classroom

For the next few years Makiguchi struggled intensely against poverty and also serious illness. During this time he continued to grapple with the philosophical and pedagogical problems raised in *Geography*. He developed a deep interest in sociology and anthropology, particularly the works of the pioneering American sociologist Lester Ward. In 1912 he published his second book, *Kyodoka*

Kenkyu (Research Studies in Folk Culture). His primary concern, once again, was with the educational implications of studying the folk culture of local communities. One of the distinguishing features of this book was its emphasis on direct, empirical observations of living conditions. In contrast, much of the energies of Japanese anthropologists were devoted to lyrical, semi-mythologized praise of the unique character and virtues of the Japanese people (Murao, 34–36).

In 1913, at the age of forty-two, Makiguchi returned to teaching as principal of a primary school in Tokyo. For the next twenty years, he served in this capacity at a number of Tokyo's public schools. Those who left accounts of him during this period remembered him as a stern and dignified man who was extremely industrious, and also as a person of great kindness who took an interest in the well-being of his students. One example of this comes from Makiguchi's period as principal of a primary school for mostly poor children. Using his own money, he prepared lunch boxes for children who could not afford them and, in order not to humiliate them, left these in the janitor's room for children to take freely (Todai Hokekyo, 24–25).

All of Makiguchi's educational efforts and his entire teaching career were centered on his concern to make the individual learner the center of educational theory and practice. As he later elaborated in *The System of Value-creating Pedagogy*, he saw the purpose of education as the lifetime happiness of the individual learner. He was deeply disturbed by the way in which children's creative potential and natural love of learning were being destroyed by prevailing peda-

gological concepts and methods. At that time in Japan, education was seen as the transmission of knowledge from those who were perceived as the authoritative custodians of that knowledge, to learners, who were empty vessels to be inculcated with the necessary information through rote learning and repetition. Makiguchi argued that education “is not the piecemeal merchandising of information; it is the provision of keys that will allow people to unlock the vault of knowledge on their own. It does not consist of pilfering the intellectual property amassed by others through no additional effort of one’s own; it would rather place people on their own path of discovery and invention” (Makiguchi, 6:285).

He called for teachers to “come down from the throne where they are ensconced as the object of veneration to become public servants who offer guidance to those who seek to ascend the throne of learning. They should not be masters who offer themselves as paragons, but partners in the discovery of new models” (Makiguchi, 6:289). Makiguchi describes his own sense of urgency in the preface to the *Pedagogy*. “I am driven by the intense desire to prevent the present deplorable situation—ten million of our children and students forced to endure the agonies of cutthroat competition, the difficulty of getting into good schools, the ‘examination hell’ and the struggle for jobs after graduation—from afflicting the next generation” (Makiguchi, 5: 8).

The determination with which he defended his principles led Makiguchi into conflict with educational authorities on a number of occasions, causing him to be transferred from school to school (Todai

Hokekyo, 24–5). He particularly opposed the widespread custom of the time of granting special treatment to the children of well-to-do families. It was this refusal to pander to the powerful that eventually led to his forced retirement in 1929. While his principled stance angered authorities, it also won him the support and admiration of many fellow teachers. In fact, on one occasion when Makiguchi was transferred from Nishimachi Elementary School, a school boycott was organized in protest (Ikeda, 9). Chief among Makiguchi’s supporters was a young educator by the name of Jogai (later Josei) Toda. Toda became such an ardent supporter of Makiguchi that when Makiguchi left Nishimachi, Toda resigned from the school. He later opened his own school in which he put Makiguchi’s educational theory into practice with considerable success (Todai Hokekyo, 46-47). Toda and Makiguchi continued to work closely together until their arrest in 1943 for opposing Japan’s militaristic policies.

The Character of Makiguchi’s Thought and ‘The System of Value-creating Pedagogy’

As Makiguchi’s teaching career drew to a close, he began to prepare for the publication of the educational methods and ideas that he had developed during his teaching years. First, Makiguchi’s thought was grounded in the intellectual paradigm of his time. He adopted a positivist view of reality, believing that conclusions should be based on scientific induction. He was particularly wary of accepting ideas that had not been validated as useful through experience and in actual practice.

“Positivism says that we are to take the daily realities before us in education as our working knowledge, then wield the scrupulous scalpel of the scientist to dissect out educational theory; that is, to yield constant truths at the root of educational practice. Only then will education embrace an integrally systematized body of knowledge” (Bethel, 1989:7–8).

His thought can perhaps be categorized under two broad but interrelated themes. One is his effort to develop a scientific pedagogy grounded in a scientific, empirical approach to education. As the above quote makes clear, he felt strongly that, rather than the abstract pedagogical theories that were imported and translated into the Japanese setting, the actual experiences of teachers should be mined for their lessons and truths.

The other theme is the specific philosophical basis that supported his pedagogy but went beyond education to examine the meaning of human life. In this, his central concerns were values and the unique human capacity to create value. He considered the work of equipping young people to create value (happiness) throughout their lives as the true mission of education.

The System of Value-creating Pedagogy, elucidates these pursuits. These two themes or concerns were intimately related. Bethel writes that Makiguchi can be understood in terms of his search “for an underlying order, for common human values, for meaning and purpose,” and it is this that led him “to formulate pragmatic conceptions of man and the world embodying the revolutionary implications of science and evolution” (Bethel, 1973:20).

From his early years as a teacher, Makiguchi had kept notes of his thoughts on education, becoming

known for the pencil stub and note paper that he constantly carried with him to jot down his ideas as they occurred. Editing and organizing these into a presentable treatise was a mammoth task. In the introduction to the *Pedagogy*, Makiguchi expresses his regret that he previously had not had time to do this, together with his appreciation for his young disciple Josei Toda, who was unstinting in his support for this project. In 1930, the first volume of the *Pedagogy* was published. Originally Makiguchi envisioned publishing twelve volumes; in the end, however, only four volumes were produced.

At the heart of Makiguchi's *Pedagogy* is his theory of value. Real happiness, he concluded, arises through the creation of value. Human beings cannot create matter, but they do have the ability to create value; herein lies the unique significance of human life. In Makiguchi's own words, "The highest and ultimate objective of life is happiness...A happy life signifies nothing but the state of existence in which one can gain and create value in full" (Bethel, 1973:50). In the second volume of the *Pedagogy* he wrote that for more than ten years he had been "constantly thinking about the difficult issue of value," even comparing its presence in his mind to a kind of tumor.

He sought to make explicit what he meant by value by contrasting it with truth, substituting benefit (or gain) for truth in the neo-Kantian value system—dominant in Japan at the time—of truth, beauty and goodness. Truth is a matter of identification, an epistemological statement about an object or event. Value, on the other hand, relates the object to human life, it is a measure of the subjective impact of a thing or



An illustration of the Aliso Viejo campus of Soka University of America, founded by SGI President Ikeda and inspired by Makiguchi's value-creating educational philosophy.

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event on us and our lives. Value, therefore, can be increased or created, whereas truth cannot.

Life, Makiguchi wrote, "is a process of creating value, and education should guide us toward this end" (Bethel, 1989:56). Education, he believed, should unlock, foster and be based on the joy of learning and discovery that is native to children. It should inspire and empower them to continue to expand themselves.

His concern with the very practical challenge of realizing this objective with his students made him impatient with abstract theorizing. The following quote, for all its simplicity, says much about the nature of his concerns and approach: "What is the purpose of national education? Rather than devise complex theoretical interpretations, it is better to start by looking at the lovely child who sits on your knee and ask yourself: What can I do to assure that this child will be able to lead the happiest life possible" (Makiguchi, 4:27).

One could contend, therefore, that Makiguchi's approach to religion was an extension, as well as a result of, his efforts to understand and explain human happiness and values.

Makiguchi's Encounter With Buddhism

As mentioned at the outset, the publication of the *Pedagogy* also marked the birth of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (Society for Value-creating Education), the educational reformist organization that gave rise to the postwar Soka Gakkai. One cannot understand the development of this organization without understanding the influence of Nichiren Buddhism on Makiguchi's thought.

As has been mentioned, Makiguchi was a committed rationalist. He believed firmly in the value of experience and of extracting principles from actual observation, rather than attempting to impose

theoretical structure onto obstinate reality. He believed in the value of the scientific method as a means of confirming observation and affirming the certainty of knowledge.

Against this background, his late-life (age 57) conversion to Nichiren Buddhism (Nichiren Shoshu) may seem anomalous.

As one considers the history and development of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (SKG) and the change from an educational research group into a religious organization, certain questions inevitably arise: How and when, precisely, did Makiguchi's conviction of the importance of religion develop? Did he perceive Buddhism as a kind of expedient, practical vehicle—congruent with his own philosophy—which could provide a more popular base for effecting social reform? Or did he perceive in Nichiren Buddhism something more complete and holistic than his ideas to that point—did he feel that this religion was the “underlying order” that he had been looking for? In short, what was the essential relationship, for Makiguchi, between the religion of Nichiren Buddhism and his own reformist ideas and activities?

Reviewing Makiguchi's writings at least as far back as *Mountains and Human Life* (1899), one discovers a remarkable consistency in his stance toward religion. In this essay, he describes the impact of mountains on the human spirit, writing that this enables us at once to commune with the cosmos and to become aware of our minuteness and fragility in the face of the vast forces of nature; and that such experience gives rise to religious interests (Makiguchi,7:344).

Likewise, in *The Geography of Human Life* (1903), he describes



Tsunesaburo Makiguchi Park, Curitiba, Brazil, was opened in 1996 and is a place the whole city can enjoy. At the center of the park is a monument containing a bust of the father of Soka education. It was dedicated on September 25, 1999 with 180 guests and 1000 SGI members in attendance.

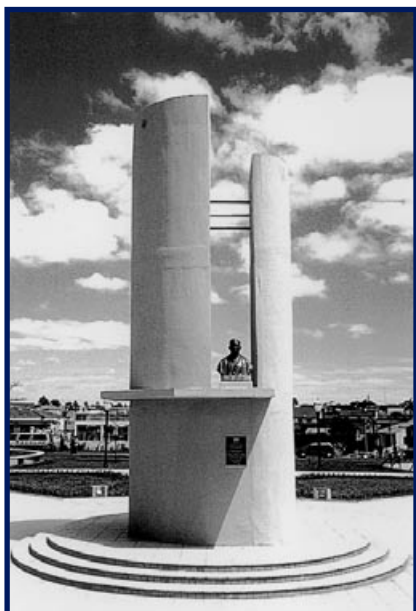
religious experience as the sense of awe inspired by those forces that exceed the scope of our individual lives as well as toward the underlying order within which we all exist (Makiguchi, 1:36).

While always skeptical of the claims of specific religions, and convinced that these must be subjected to careful scrutiny, he never denied the value of religion or religious experience per se.

From early in life, Makiguchi was exposed to a number of faiths. Although born into a Zen Buddhist family, his adoptive family practiced a form of Nichiren Buddhism, and he had many close Christian friends, including the famous diplomat Inazo Nitobe. Up until his conversion to Nichiren Buddhism, he continued to actively explore various religious practices. Summing up his experience with religious practices, Makiguchi states that “in none of them could I sense the power that could either overturn my scientific and philosophical orientation, or

harmonize with it” (Makiguchi, 5:405). Koichi Miyata goes so far as to interpret Makiguchi's experience with religious faiths as a search for one that would meet his own stringent criteria (Miyata, 72).

In 1928, Makiguchi met Sotei Mitani, the principal of a vocational school and a lay practitioner of Nichiren Shoshu. Years earlier Makiguchi had attended a lecture on Nichiren Buddhism by the nationalist Chigaku Tanaka, but had been unimpressed by him. His encounter with Mitani had a completely different effect on him. He was deeply impressed with Mitani's explanation of how religion is integrated and concerned with the daily reality of people's lives. Mitani explained Buddhism from Nichiren's perspective that “no affairs of life or work are in any way different from the ultimate reality? A person of wisdom is not one who practices Buddhism apart from worldly affairs...” He explained the existence of an ultimate “Law” that is neither transcendent nor anthropo-



Makiguchi Park Monument

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morphic, which does not exist above or beyond reality, but within it. (Later, Makiguchi would break with Mitani for personal, but also philosophical reasons. Mitani apparently insisted on what might be termed a “fundamentalist” approach to Buddhism, feeling that if the sacred texts described beings with human heads and animal bodies, these must exist. Makiguchi could not bring himself to accept such unscientific views.)

On beginning to study the Lotus Sutra, the key text of Mahayana Buddhism, and Nichiren’s interpretation of it, Makiguchi was struck by how fully these accorded with his rationalist principles. “When, however, I reached the point of encountering the Lotus Sutra, I was astonished to discover that it in no way contradicted the scientific and philosophical principles which form the basis for our daily lives, and that it differed fundamentally from all religious and moral practices which I had studied to date. And just as I found myself moved by this discov-

ery, I experienced a number of inexplicable phenomena in my daily life, which accorded precisely with the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.... With a joy that is beyond the power of words to express, I have completely renewed the way of life I had pursued for almost sixty years” (Makiguchi, 5:36).

He further described his encounter with Buddhism as giving new life to his theory of value (Ikeda, 10). Thus, while Makiguchi makes no references to which aspects of his pre-conversion philosophy were “overturned” and which were “harmonized” with Buddhism, it seems clear that the experience was overwhelmingly one of harmonization. In Buddhism, he found a system of belief that re-energized and deepened his convictions about the central importance of empowering individuals. This is reflected in the gradual shift in the rhetoric of the organization he founded from a focus on educational reform to one of religious reform.

It does not seem unreasonable to speculate that Makiguchi’s conversion represented a profound harmonization between the scientific-rationalist tradition of the West—in which he was steeped and to which he was committed—and the intuitive appreciation of the processes of the inner life that characterizes the religious tradition of Asia. Nor does it seem to go too far to suggest that it is in the pre- and post-conversion consistency of Makiguchi’s thinking—particularly on the question of value—that the distinguishing aspects of the Soka Gakkai can be located. Makiguchi’s pragmatic, this-worldly approach to religious practice—as a source of insight and energy through which people can create value amidst the needs and trials of daily living—has been carried forward by the subsequent leaders of the organization. It seems rea-

sonable to speculate that this approach has played an important role in the degree of acceptance realized by the Soka Gakkai movement in late-twentieth century Japan as well as in cultural settings with scant prior exposure to Buddhism.

What then were the specific aspects of Nichiren Buddhism that appealed to Makiguchi? Miyata describes three characteristics that Makiguchi found especially attractive: 1) an emphasis on empirical experience and congruence with the scientific method; 2) The centrality of a universal law or principle as the focus of faith rather than an anthropomorphic being or deity; and 3) an emphasis on the identity of the secular and Buddhist realms, the stance of using religion’s contribution to society as the gauge of its validity (Miyata, 75).

In the *Pedagogy*, Makiguchi further clarified his view on the value of religion. Rejecting the idea that “the sacred” represents an independent category of value, Makiguchi states that religion generates the value of benefit or gain only to the degree that it enhances individuals’ lives. To the degree it contributes to the advancement of society it creates the value of good. Benefit, or gain and good, along with beauty, form the core of Makiguchi’s system of value. As Ikeda has described it, Makiguchi’s consistent contention was that religion must serve humanity; humanity does not exist to serve religion (Ikeda, 15).

The Soka Kyoiku Gakkai

Around the time of the publication of the *Pedagogy*, and with the freedom that his forced retirement now afforded him, Makiguchi began the work of organizing support for his vision of educa-

tional and social reform. This was the beginning of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (SKG), which after the war would be reconstituted as the Soka Gakkai. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the development of this organization at this point in its history is the dramatic shift it underwent, in only a few years, from being an organization for intellectuals interested in educational and pedagogical reform, to being a broad-based religious movement.

Unfortunately, information about the pre-war history of the SKG—the nature of its activities, the growth of its membership and particularly how the transition in its focus occurred—is limited. Much of what we know about it must be gleaned from the content of the organization’s publications. It is apparent that, at its inception, the SKG embraced a distinctive pedagogical agenda. In the preface to the *Pedagogy*, Makiguchi writes: “There are many issues of urgency that we have to deal with in our movement for educational reform. Soka Kyoiku Gakkai aims to tackle these issues as a cooperative effort among those sharing the same aspiration” (Makiguchi 5;10). *Kankyo* (Environment), the first magazine that Makiguchi and Toda produced (in 1930), was published with the aim of providing educators with “teaching material related to daily living” and to encourage them to develop a more scientific or systematic pedagogy.

Thus, at the time of founding, the main emphasis of the organization was on social change through educational reform. The religious aspect that was to become prominent was at this point secondary, or at least of secondary visibility.

Bethel suggests that Makiguchi was motivated to shift emphasis toward religious reformation by a sense of

frustration with the progress of his efforts to effect educational reform (Bethel, 1973:90). Makiguchi’s own writings offer evidence supporting this view. In 1937, reflecting on the seven years since the first volume of the *Pedagogy* was published, Makiguchi noted that while this was perhaps the inevitable outcome of the fact that his pedagogy was built on a new theory of value, it was impossible not to be disappointed by the lack of response on the part of the national educational establishment (Makiguchi, 9:234).

Whatever the motivation, by 1935 the evidence of this transition from an educational to a religious focus becomes apparent. *The Soka Kyoiku Gaku Taikei Kogai* (Synopsis of The System of Value-creating Pedagogy) is a pamphlet outlining the principles of Makiguchi’s pedagogy published in that year. This espouses the goal of the SKG as educational reform based on Makiguchi’s principles of value-creating pedagogy and includes a number of specific reform proposals and goals. In *Shinkyō* (New Teachings), the society’s publication from 1935 to 1936, however, there appear many articles about the society’s religious activities as well as slogans advocating religious reform on its cover (Miyata, 15).

It appears that the group also held discussion meetings where both religion and education were discussed. In August of 1935, the group held its first summer session at Taiseki-ji, the Nichiren Shoshu head temple (Todai Hokekyo, 50).

Likewise, the December 1935 edition of *Shinkyō* contains the following statement, which clearly reflects how Makiguchi saw the relationship between religion and other forms of institutionalized activity: “Reforms of worldly issues such as politics or economics are the trimming of branches



A young Josei Toda (right) and his mentor, Makiguchi.

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and leaves while educational and religious reforms nourish the roots” (Todai Hokekyo, 51). He also stated that educational reforms should be based on religious reform and wrote that, without the fundamental inner transformation of human beings, the chaos plaguing human affairs will never be brought to an end (Ibid.). It seems therefore that, by 1935 at least, the organization included a significant religious focus.

In 1936, the platform of the organization was revised to “better reflect the reality of the movement” (Miyata, 15). It now gave specific expression to the religious focus of the organization, stating that, together with its aim of effecting national educational reform through “pedagogical studies centering on the system of value-creating pedagogy, it shall also aim at achieving religious revolution essential in realizing educational reform” (Ibid.).

In 1937, the group held a “founding meeting,” with sixty people in

attendance, at which Makiguchi was formally elected as the organization's president. The members continued to meet to report on their research programs and their personal experiences until the government disbanded the organization in 1943 (Bethel, 1973:97).

In 1939, as the world lay poised on the brink of total war, another general meeting of the SKG was held. The focus of this meeting was almost completely religious. In July 1941, the organization's new monthly periodical, *Kachi Sozo* (Value Creation), began publishing the organization's platform, rules and regulations, and purpose. It is clear from this that a dramatic change had occurred in the organization, and that its focus was now overwhelmingly religious.

In the fourth issue, the SKG's purpose was defined as scientific experimentation and demonstration of living with supreme value based on Buddhist practice:

Our organization, consisting of those who embrace the Three Great Secret Laws, the essence of the Lotus Sutra, strives to achieve peace and tranquillity for all. It will be realized by putting their faith into practice in daily life to scientifically observe the relationship between religion and living, and being testimony to the presence and degree of value in that relationship. We have sought to achieve supreme results in education and life in general, and arrived at the fundamental causes to realize them. We have established a guidance-oriented teaching method, and used this method to scientifically test means of achieving greater happiness for all. For the past decade,



The new main building of Soka University at Hachioji, Japan, a symbol of Makiguchi's quest for humanistic education shared by second president of the Soka Gakkai Josei Toda, and the university's founder, Daisaku Ikeda.

we have set an example unprecedented in the world by demonstrating actual proof of the experiment thanks to our comrades' wholehearted commitment and practice. We have thus taken the initiative in breaking through the deadlock the world and our country are facing. (Miyata, 16)

This was followed by six concrete proposals: 1) Reform of educational methodology. 2) Reform of lifestyle. 3) Reform of research method. 4) Reform of morality. 5) Reform of philosophy. 6) Reform of religion (Ibid.).

The journal *Kachi Sozo* continued to feature articles on pedagogical issues. Increasingly, however, it featured mostly testimonials by members with no particular ties to the realm of education about the benefits they had received from the practice of Nichiren Buddhism (Bethel 1973, 97).

Kachi Sozo published for less than one year, from July 1941 to May 1942, when it was ordered to cease

publication by the authorities. Its short life overlaps with a crucial period in the history of World War II, including the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, Hong Kong and Singapore. Makiguchi's writings through this period are informed by an escalating sense of urgency. It is clear that he was increasingly convinced that only the kind of fundamental, spiritual renewal that he had found in his own religious experience could enable Japan and the world to avoid the disaster toward which it was rushing.

This change in the organization's focus also began to be reflected in the organization's membership. More and more, the organization began to include people from a far greater spectrum of society who had been attracted by the broader religious issues that Makiguchi was now discussing, not only intellectuals interested in reform. No detailed demographic data exist that would

offer a portrait of the organization's membership or its shift from one primarily of educators to one more reflective of the general population. However, in Toda's novelized history of the organization, *Ningen Kakumei* (The Human Revolution), Makiguchi is portrayed as engaged in propagation activities among Japan's urban proletariat and many of his converts are women seeking relief from the "karmic burden" of poverty and abusive relationships.

In terms of its size, the organization had increased from 500 people in 1940 to 3,000 the following year (Toda's *Hokekyo*, 1:56). It is obvious that, from 1939, Makiguchi had initiated a much more broad-based social movement.

Arrest and Death In Prison

As Japan's drive toward war intensified, the government became increasingly wary and repressive of voices of dissent. As it concentrated its efforts to rally its subjects behind the cause of its expansionist war, it grew ever less tolerant of any expressions of independent thought.

In April 1939, the state enacted the Religious Organizations Law, which enabled it to disband any religious organization that contradicted the "Imperial Way." Likewise, in 1940, a new administrative body was established and for the first time, the promotion of respect for the Shinto gods became the official objective of the state. Miyata describes this as signifying the completion of the system of State Shinto (Miyata, 214).

According to this ideology, the emperor was, as a descendent of the sun-goddess, a living deity who should be worshipped by the popu-

lace. In this way, the state generated a powerful, unquestioning nationalistic patriotism in support of its policies. Each household, as well as all places of worship, were required to enshrine Shinto talismans. In 1941, the Peace Preservation Act of 1925 was revised, expanding its original focus to specifically prohibit, under penalty of death, any acts or even thoughts that demeaned the dignity of the emperor or of State Shinto. It was for violation of this law that the leaders of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai would be arrested in 1943.

During the 1930s, state authorities had already violently suppressed a number of sects, most notably the Omoto sect in 1935. The pressure to conform and accept the supremacy of State Shinto was felt by the entire religious community of Japan and, one after another, the various schools revised their teachings and practices to accommodate the demands of the state. For example, the various sects tracing their lineage to Nichiren, including Nichiren Shoshu, agreed to expunge from his writings those passages that place the authority of the Buddhist dharma above that of secular powers or that could otherwise be construed as blasphemous of the Emperor.

Within this context, Makiguchi remained outspoken. According to his indictment, during the two years prior to his arrest, Makiguchi attended more than 240 small-scale discussion meetings. (These meetings continue to be the principal venue for SGI membership activities worldwide.) Many of these meetings were conducted under the direct surveillance of the Special Higher Police. Participants recollect that Makiguchi would be cut short by the police as soon as the subject turned to the matter of State Shinto (Ikeda, 12).

Makiguchi expressed his views in writing also. For example, in the December 20, 1941 issue of *Kachi Sozo*, Makiguchi wrote the following: "We must strictly avoid following ideologies of uncertain origin that cannot be substantiated by actual proof—even if they may be the most time-honored tradition—and thereby sacrificing the precious life of the entire community of self and others. In this sense, the question of [compulsory worship at] Shinto shrines must be re-examined as a matter of great urgency" (Makiguchi, 10:26). The timing of this statement, only weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, suggests the courage required to express such views publicly. As mentioned, *Kachi Sozo* was forced to cease publication five months later, in May 1942.

In June 1941, Makiguchi was summoned to the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu. There, in the presence of the present and two former high priests, he was urged to accept the Shinto talisman and to encourage the members of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai to do the same. Makiguchi refused to accept this symbolic embodiment of the sacralized state. Writing after the war, Toda recalls him stating: "What are they [the priesthood] so afraid of? Now is the time to admonish the state" (July–August *Daibyakurenge*, 1951, "The History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai").

In July 1943, Makiguchi, Toda and nineteen other leaders of the SKG were arrested. *Tokko Geppo* (Monthly Report of the Special Higher Police) reports the arrest of Makiguchi: "The thoughts and beliefs of [Soka Kyoiku Gakkai] related persons centering on President Makiguchi manifest a number of subversive and seditious elements. Following secret investiga-

tions by the Police Agency as well as the Fukuoka Prefecture Special Higher Police Department, the Agency on the seventh day of this month arrested and interrogated Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and five other persons for suspicion of blaspheming the dignity of the Imperial Grand Shrine and *lèse-majesté*." Makiguchi was charged with expressing such opinions as: "The emperor is a common mortal"; "The emperor should not demand [people's] loyalty"; and "There is no need to worship the Grand Shrine of Ise"—a site with close ties to the imperial household (*Tokko Geppo*, July 1943, 27–28).

Makiguchi spent the rest of his life, some five hundred days, in prison, much of it in solitary confinement. He continued to express his religious and philosophical views, fully aware that continued adherence to these views would prevent his release. For the authorities, recantation followed by release was of course the preferred outcome when dealing with "thought criminals." They had techniques of applying physical and psychological pressure that produced an extremely high rate of recantation. Other than Makiguchi, Toda and one other person, all of the arrested leaders of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai recanted and were released. Makiguchi and Toda were among the few dissenting thinkers—the others were principally Christians and communists—who held to their beliefs to the very end.

An excerpted version of Makiguchi's written responses to his interrogators was published in *Tokko Geppo* (Monthly Report of the Special Higher Police) and is extant as are the letters he was permitted to write home once every ten days. These reveal Makiguchi as extraordi-

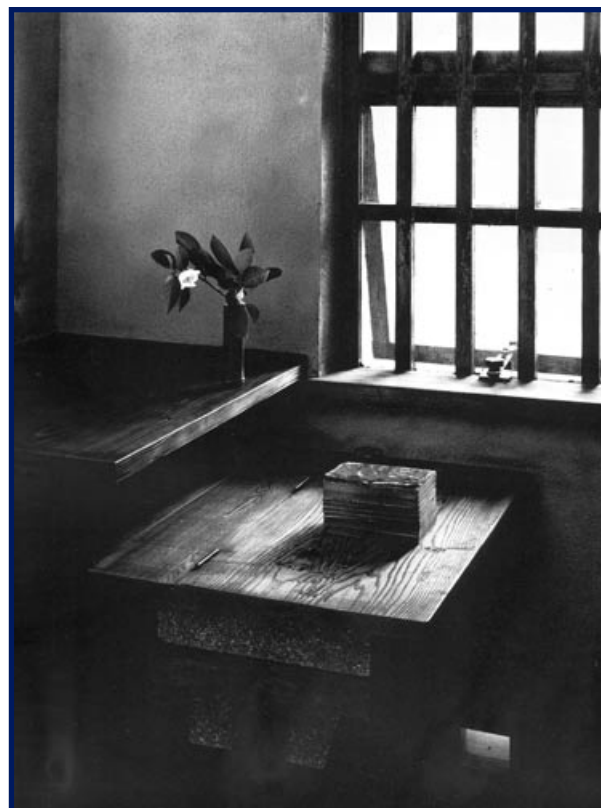
narily composed. In the interrogation record, for example, he repeats and elaborates those views regarding State Shinto and the emperor that had caused his arrest. There is an almost Socratic calm about the manner in which Makiguchi seized what he perhaps sensed was his last opportunity to give his ideas fuller expression.

He first describes the religious practice of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai as a fusion of the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin transmitted within Nichiren Shoshu and of his own theory of value. He then explains why he chose not to become a priest of Nichiren Shoshu but remain a lay believer. "If I were to become ordained and have a temple, I would be confined in my actions to the teachings of Nichiren Shoshu. It would hardly be appropriate for me to promote my theory of value at a temple. I believe that my real purpose is fulfilled in remaining a lay believer and introducing my theory of value into the faith principles of Nichiren Shoshu. This is where the unique characteristics of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai are to be found." (*Tokko Geppo*, August 1943:140).

Throughout the record, Makiguchi demonstrates an independence of thought and interpreta-

tion that underlines the distance and tensions with Nichiren Shoshu. Before its suppression, a number of articles in *Kachi Sozo*, not all necessarily of Makiguchi's authorship, had voiced criticism of the "old-style" faith of the priests and traditional parishioners of Nichiren Shoshu whose lack of enthusiasm for propagation activities was felt to reflect a selfish unwillingness to share the "great good" of Buddhism with others and society as a whole.

As Makiguchi makes clear in the record, the Buddhist Law is not something that can be owned by any individual or sect. For him, it is first and foremost a universal law of causality. "Buddhism is not something invented or created by Shakyamuni. Without beginning or end, it is a law governing



A voluminous book of Nichiren Daishonin's writings sits quietly on a table in an isolated cell in the Tokyo prison, where Makiguchi died November 18, 1944.

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and giving vitality to the constant flow of all phenomena since time without beginning. What is called Buddhism are simply acts and practices that accord with this already existing law or principle” (*Tokko Geppo*, August 1943:145).

He describes the ongoing war as a “national disaster” brought about by adherence to mistaken ideologies. (At the time, the war was almost universally described as a “holy war.”) Makiguchi also repeated his assertion that the emperor is a common mortal and not infallible. He also declared that the emperor must obey the law of cause and effect and that if he would embrace Buddhism, “His Majesty would naturally develop the kind of wisdom that would enable him to carry out political policies without error” (*Tokko Geppo*, August 1943:152,156).

The letters that Makiguchi wrote from prison to his wife and daughter-in-law offer a portrait of a philosophic transcendence of his present difficulties combined with an unshaken commitment to pragmatic action. He compares life in his three-mat (approximately six by nine feet) solitary cell to “living in a small apartment where I can read books and lack for nothing.” In the same letter, he writes: “Let us all make faith our first priority. We should strengthen our faith, aware that whatever trials we face are insignificant compared with those of the Daishonin. We live in the midst of limitless, boundless benefit and can in no way resent events such as the present ones. From past experiences it is clear that ‘poison will turn to medicine’ just as the sutra and writings of Nichiren Daishonin teach us” (Makiguchi, 10:278). In another letter he wrote, in a line scratched out by the censors, “Depending on our

attitude, even hell has its pleasures.”

Through these letters, Makiguchi tried to protect and encourage his family and fellow members of the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai. He remained engaged in the problems and challenges of daily living to the very end. For example, in a number of letters, he scolds his daughter-in-law, Sadako, for her failure to date letters (so that he can judge how long the process of censorship takes) or to provide the kind of concrete, detailed information he required.

Makiguchi’s last letter was dated October 15, a little more than one month before his death. It is a response to a letter from Sadako informing Makiguchi that his son (her husband) Yozo had been killed in battle. “I was shocked by this blow. But even more I was concerned how the two of you [Sadako and Makiguchi’s wife, Kuma] were bearing up. I was relieved to learn that you are taking this with a firm determination.... Please inform only those who were close to him, not forgetting his aunt in Hokkaido.” After encouraging them to take comfort in their faith, he concludes with a statement of confidence in his accomplishment and the validity of Buddhist teachings.

“I have been carefully rereading Kant’s philosophy. It is clear I have been able to develop a theory of value that philosophers for the past hundred years have sought without success. At the same time, I have linked this to the faith of the Lotus Sutra, the truth of which has been proven by the experiences of several thousand practitioners. At the risk of sounding boastful, I find myself astonished at this. In this sense, it is no wonder that the three obstacles and four devils¹ have arisen to

oppose us. It is just as the sutra teaches” (Makiguchi, 10:301).

1. Various obstacles and hindrances to the practice of Buddhism. Three obstacles are: 1) the obstacle of earthly desires; 2) the obstacle of karma, which may also refer to opposition from one’s spouse or children; and 3) the obstacle of retribution, also obstacles caused by one’s superiors, such as rulers or parents. The four devils are: 1) the hindrance of the five components; 2) the hindrance of earthly desires; 3) the hindrance of death, because untimely death obstructs one’s practice of Buddhism or because the premature death of another practitioner causes doubts; and 4) the hindrance of the devil king.

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DIALOGUE

ON THE *Lotus Sutra*

The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra— A Discussion on Religion in the Twenty-first Century

51

The Victory of a “Family Revolution”

This is the fifty-first installment of an ongoing discussion on the Lotus Sutra among SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, Soka Gakkai Study Department Chief Katsuji Saito and vice chiefs Takanori Endo and Haruo Suda. It appeared in the April 1999 issue of the *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

Creating a harmonious family through faith is one of the eternal guidelines of the SGI. The “Former Affairs of King Wonderful Adornment” (twenty-seventh) chapter of the Lotus Sutra describes how a

king is led to the Law through the efforts of his wife and two children. This chapter outlines the principles for a “family revolution.” Through its description of a wife and children causing a powerful husband to change his authoritarian ways, the chapter is also a guideline for realizing kosen-rufu in any country. In this installment, the participants discuss the importance of treating non-practicing family members with compassion. They also look at relations between couples and between parents and children, and how to share faith in the Mystic Law with one’s children.

DAISAKU IKEDA: Just this past February [1999], a number of SGI representatives from Asia visited Okinawa. Regarding one couple who were there, I commented: “Their daughter is now a senior in high school. In the future, when she falls in love and marries, her father will be the one who misses her the most. Mothers know that one day their daughters will get married, and so take it in stride. Because fathers always cherish their daughters above all, they lie awake at night in tears!

“The Lotus Sutra explains the enlightenment of the dragon king’s daughter. Her name is written [in Chinese] with two characters; the first (dragon) corresponds to *father*, and the second (woman) corresponds to *daughter*. The father-daughter relationship is extremely profound.

“Therefore, even after a daughter falls in love and gets married, nothing makes a father happier than for his daughter to tell him that she loves him best of all. There is no sentiment more appreciated by a father. A family where the daughter cherishes her father is a happy one.”

KATSUJI SAITO: This may seem simple, but I think it is a fundamental principle of humanity.

IKEDA: Nichiren Daishonin’s wisdom is that: “Women support others and thereby cause others to support them” (WND, 501).¹ This is Buddhist psychology; it reveals insight into humanity. While this guidance was directed at women, taking into consideration the social conditions of the day, it is wisdom that applies to both women and men, as well as to couples and to parents and children.

TAKANORI ENDO: The same would apply towards a father who does not practice.

IKEDA: Yes, it is the same principle — we should treat a father who does not practice with great care and sincerity, always asking after his health and encouraging him to live long. Becoming a good child, a good spouse — that is proof of our faith. If we instead let our families down because of our Buddhist practice, then what is the point of faith?

It is foolish to quarrel over matters of faith. Besides, often when family members are opposed to a person’s faith, it is not so much because they have a problem with the practice itself but more with the behavior of the person. It is not uncommon for people to attribute their spousal problems to issues of faith.

Of course, such problems are fundamentally due to our own karma. And sometimes they are the workings of the three obstacles and four devils [types of problems

that test one’s faith in Buddhism]. That is why the Daishonin says to the wives of the Ikegami brothers, “You two wives should have no regrets even if your husbands do you harm because of your faith in this teaching” (WND, 502). He also states, “Whether tempted by good or threatened by evil, if one casts aside the Lotus Sutra, one destines oneself for hell” (WND, 280). The important thing is to maintain faith under any circumstances. This is the foundation of happiness.

We need to strengthen our faith. This is the basis for everything. Then we can lead our entire family to happiness. Steadfast faith does not mean projecting a heroic image. It means showing genuine concern and consideration for others’ circumstances. Even the smallest act of consideration shines with a brilliant light.

“Treasure Your Wife and Children”

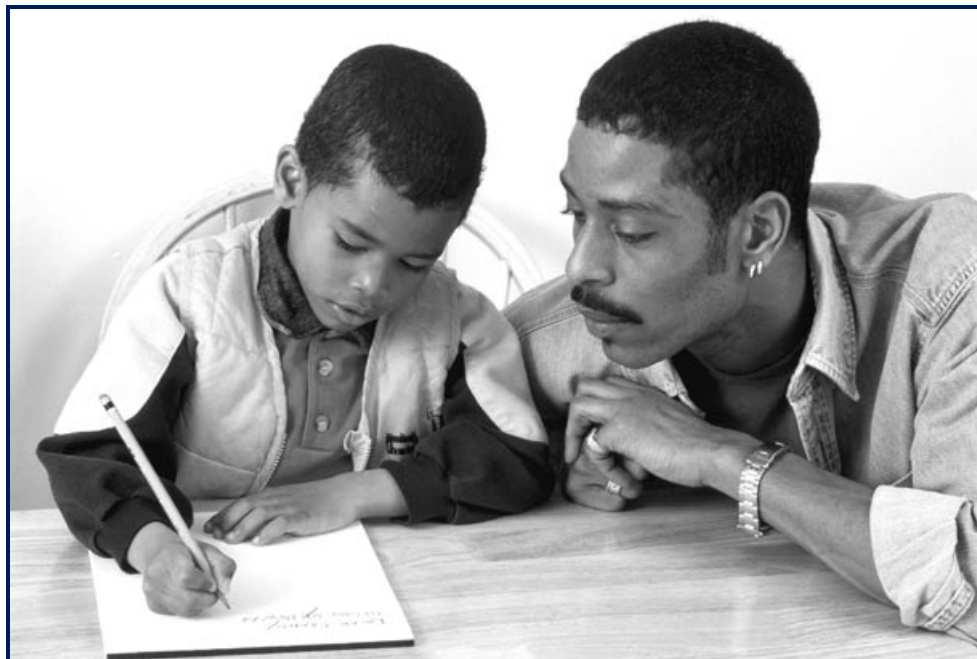
IKEDA: Second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda was frequently asked about family members who opposed the practice.

To someone whose children were against their Buddhist practice, he said, “You need to show how much you love your children. . . . If parents treasure their children, there is no way the children will turn against them. Nothing can match a parent’s compassion. It’s because your children aren’t getting enough affection that your family is in discord. It’s not the children’s fault, it’s you, the parent’s fault. If you try to blame your misfortune on the Gohonzon, you will only make matters worse.”²

To someone whose wife opposed his faith, President Toda said: “You must fulfill your responsibilities as a husband. A husband should adore his wife and be able to buy her a new dress on occasion.

“You need to resolve this problem yourself. Your wife is not the problem. You are. First, you must change. You must become an admirable human being. You are allowing yourself to be held back by your wife’s opposition. It’s up to you to develop an expansive state of life. . . . As long as you are complaining to your wife, you are not practicing correctly. When you can show your wife the appreciation you would show the Buddha, she will have nothing to object to.

“There is usually no reason for a husband to complain about his wife. After all she’s not receiving a paycheck from you! And I bet you don’t even buy her new clothes! So, rather than grumbling all the time, you should cherish her dearly. That is where faith begins. I



It is vital that children know their parents love them. Busy parents must use wisdom to create the time to spend with their children. It's about letting children know their parents care.

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SUDA: The king was the only one in his family who did not practice Buddhism. It is a tale of how the wife and two children enabled the king to take faith.

The Conflict Between Custom and Progress

ENDO: A long, long time ago there was a king named Wonderful Adornment. The king's wife was named Pure Virtue; and their two sons were Pure Storehouse and Pure

Eye. As you can see, the names of the three all include the word *pure*.

Eye. As you can see, the names of the three all include the word *pure*.

can't stand to hear men complain about their wives not practicing or blame their wives for their problems when they themselves aren't doing much of anything."³

The queen and two princes took faith in the teaching expounded by a Buddha named Cloud Thunder Sound Constellation King Flower Wisdom. The king alone remained deeply attached to Brahmanism.

ENDO: It's very clear, isn't it?

HARUO SUDA: The guidance of the Soka Gakkai remains consistent.

SAITO: We can surmise that Shakyumuni's India, in which Brahmanism had already become an established teaching and Buddhism was a new teaching recently introduced by the Buddha, provided the model for this story.

SAITO: It seems as if we've already reached our conclusion before even beginning our discussion of the "Former Affairs of King Wonderful Adornment" (twenty-seventh) chapter!

IKEDA: Fathers often tend to be conservative. Youth, on the other hand, are more likely to possess adventurous spirits. They purely seek the truth, favoring what is right and just over tradition. But fathers are likely to say, "Right or wrong, this is the way it's been done for years!" This is also a problem attributable to the "generation gap."

IKEDA: No. We still need to provide ample evidence for our conclusions based on the sutra. Let's thoroughly clarify how to develop the kind of excellent faith that can create a harmonious family. This chapter contains a number of important points.

SUDA: The king is too proud and obstinate to listen to the advice of his children and wife.

ENDO: In the title, "Former Affairs of King Wonderful Adornment," *former affairs* indicates origins or history. So this chapter describes the kind of person King Wonderful Adornment was, as well as some of his experiences and episodes.

ENDO: He is surprisingly small-minded. Yet, as a man, I can relate to him!

IKEDA: Yes, it's a well-known story.

IKEDA: In the SGI, too, it is often the wife and/or children who begin to practice, with the husband joining last. It is just as the Lotus Sutra describes. The parallel is amazing.

SAITO: A patriarchal system derived from Brahmanism was the foundation of Indian society at the time when Buddhism was spreading. This meant that fathers had absolute control over all members of the family. It was in this context that women and the young were drawn to the new teaching of Buddhism. It seems that this led to conflicts in many families. In fact, there are Buddhist texts that describe such circumstances. This is probably the reason for the “King Wonderful Adornment” chapter.

IKEDA: What we are looking at is a clash between new and old ideas. When new ideas are genuine, they usually cause quite a stir. Simple idealism, or temporary youthful indulgences do not usually give rise to real generational conflict.

ENDO: I can imagine that no one would be particularly upset with family members who decide to embrace that family’s traditional religion.

SUDA: Actually, they might be praised as pious youth!

SAITO: But a revolutionary religion that enables people to change on the deepest level will invariably be opposed by old traditions. This is proof of its genuineness.

IKEDA: It goes without saying that movements that go against common sense or are anti-social in nature will be challenged. But even people who follow reason and strive for the sake of their family’s happiness and the well-being of society are met with opposition. That is the fate of those who create a new age.

Overcoming the various conflicts at home one by one and building family harmony is the way to transform society. This reformation that is *kosen-rufu* can only be achieved through the collective transformation of individual families.

SAITO: The “King Wonderful Adornment” chapter tells the story of a son who converts his father. I imagine that for the people of ancient India this must have been a landmark event. As the Japanese Buddhist scholar Dr. Hajime Nakamura points out, “The arbitrary and absolute obedience to the head of the household of traditional Brahmanism has no place in the Buddhist sutras.”⁴

IKEDA: In Buddhism, all family members are equally respected as individuals. This is extremely progressive. Buddhism is therefore essentially incompatible with the traditional Japanese concept of religion [as *family-centric*, that is,] that one must adhere to the religion of one’s ancestors.

SUDA: Buddhist thought has much in common with the modern concept of human rights. The Japanese modern constitution, which is based on humanism, guarantees freedom of religion to everyone.

IKEDA: From that standpoint, we are talking about a conflict between humanism and old customs that fail to recognize individual rights, rather than between Buddhism and the religions of one’s ancestors.

Changing the Erroneous Views of the Powerful

World-Honored One, these two sons of mine have carried out the Buddha’s work, employing transcendental powers and transformations to turn my mind away from heresies, enabling me to abide safely in the Buddha’s Law, and permitting me to see the World-Honored One. These two sons have been good friends to me. They wished to awaken the good roots from my past existences and to enrich and benefit me, and for that reason they were born into my household. (LS27, 316–17)⁵

IKEDA: The “King Wonderful Adornment” chapter is not just the story of a family. In telling the story of a royal family, a family that has power, it is describing how a country may be saved by enabling the powerful to embrace Buddhism. If the rulers of the land do not change, people’s suffering will continue. It is said, in fact, that seventy to eighty percent of the world’s problems exist because of the way governments are run.

SAITO: I agree. In the “King Wonderful Adornment” chapter, it is the Buddha himself who first determines to guide the king to Buddhism.

SUDA: It says, “At that time the Buddha, wishing to attract and guide King Wonderful Adornment, and because he thought with compassion for living beings, preached the Lotus Sutra” (LS27, 313). The Buddha aspires to lead a country founded on erroneous views to happiness through the supreme teaching of Buddhism.

ENDO: Learning of the Buddha’s spirit, the two sons Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye decide to introduce their parents to the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

IKEDA: Wishing to reply to the will of their teacher, the Buddha, they take resolute action.

ENDO: They speak first with their mother Pure Virtue. Their mother responds, “You should go to your father,

tell him about this, and persuade him to go with you [to hear the Buddha preach].” At this, the two cry, “We are sons of the Dharma King, and yet we have been born into this family of heretical views!” (LS27, 313).

IKEDA: But their mother is strong, saying in effect: “What good will it do to lament your situation!” “Stop complaining!” She encourages them to change their reality.

SUDA: Yes. She tells them to have compassion for their father.

IKEDA: This is an important point. Our strong concern for the happiness of others is crucial. Without compassion, we will not be fulfilled and will tend to complain. We will find ourselves swayed and defeated by our circumstances.

The brothers probably couldn’t understand why their father would not embrace their faith even though they were practicing so hard. But that’s nothing but self-pity. If we have a negative attitude, thinking, “Why am I not getting the results I want when I have done so much already?” that is the reason we won’t see results. Faith is not emotionalism. Faith is courage. To become happy, we must have courage.

Queen Pure Virtue possesses the wisdom that comes from compassion. Therefore, she knows that abruptly telling the king about Buddhism won’t work. So she advises her children how to go about it.

SAITO: She tells them: “You should manifest some supernatural wonder for him. When he sees that, his mind will surely be cleansed and purified and he will permit us to go to where the Buddha is” (LS27, 313).

IKEDA: She knows how her husband’s mind works! It is said that behind every great accomplishment there is a woman. True to these words, it is thanks to the boys’ mother that their father changes and the entire land is transformed.



Members of a family share a deep karmic connection from the past. Because of this they should help one another become happy as good friends. This is a lesson from the “Former Affairs of King Wonderful Adornment” chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Above, a woman sews while her husband smokes a pipe. From a seventeenth-century Intaglio print.

In other words, she understands that just asking their father to change would have no effect. So she instructs them instead to show through their actions how they themselves changed through their faith.

SUDA: The two sons then go straight to their father to demonstrate their supernatural abilities. They leap high into the air and freely walk around and lie down; they produce water and fire from their bodies; they make themselves so huge that their bodies cover the sky and then they return to normal size.

ENDO: They disappear into thin air and then suddenly reappear; they dive into the ground as if it were water, and walk on water as if it were land.

SAITO: The sutra says that they manifest these various supernatural wonders out of genuine love and compassion for their father (cf. LS27, 313–14).

In the Sanskrit text, the mother tells her sons, “If you treat your father with compassion, then he will respond with compassion and understand your intent.”

IKEDA: In fact, King Wonderful Adornment is thrilled to see the supernatural talents of his sons. All parents delight at seeing the splendid growth of their children.

ENDO: The king presses his palms together and says to his sons, “Who is your teacher? Whose disciples are you?” (LS27, 314). The two proudly respond that the Buddha who expounds the Lotus Sutra “is our teacher and we are his disciples” (LS27, 314).

SUDA: At this, the king says, “I would like to go now and see your teacher. You can go with me” (LS27, 314).

ENDO: At this point he’s on the verge of taking faith.

SAITO: I think we can say that in his heart he has already accepted Buddhism.

SUDA: The sons’ strategy works, and they succeed in breaking down the walls in the king’s heart.

Faith That Makes the Impossible Possible

IKEDA: Such is the power of actual proof. Nothing is stronger. The king’s sons offer proof of their human revolution. The Daishonin says, “Nothing is more certain than actual proof” (WND, 478); and, “even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact” (WND, 599).

Family members in particular need to see proof for they know us best. No matter how great we may present ourselves outside the home, our family clearly sees the reality of our situation. Of course, there are most likely also sides of us that our family is the last to know.

At any rate, parents can see the growth of their children, and a wife can tell when her husband has changed for the better. It is this human revolution that amounts to “supernatural abilities.”

The fact that the Ikegami brothers of the Daishonin’s time were able to guide their father, who had been adamantly opposed to their practice, to the Daishonin’s teaching is surely a demonstration of their noble humanity which enabled them to remain undaunted even in the face of their father’s opposition.

SAITO: “Supernatural ability,” as you mentioned, does not simply mean superhuman power; it refers to a human revolution. The Daishonin says, “Outside of the attainment of Buddhahood, there is no ‘secret’ and no ‘transcendental power’” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 753).

SUDA: In saying that Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye display supernatural abilities, the sutra is speaking to the capacity of the people of the time.

IKEDA: That’s probably a fair statement. The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China calls this “preaching the Law in a way that accords with society.” On that premise, it could also be said that the concept of supernatural abilities represents the principle of “making the impossible possible.”

We may casually speak the words “actual proof” and “human revolution,” but in reality these are not easy to achieve. Although many profess faith in Buddhism, those who carry out genuine faith and practice are very few.

We cannot attain Buddhahood by practicing halfheartedly or out of force of habit. There’s no such thing as a self-centered, egotistical Buddhist practice. That wouldn’t be “practicing the Buddha’s teaching,” but practicing one’s own teaching. Only by carrying out faith single-mindedly dedicated to the achievement of kosen-rufu can we change our karma.

The only way to cause a transformation in those running a country is to demonstrate the true power of the people through courageous prayer and struggle to “make the impossible possible.”

To take on such a struggle with an easygoing attitude will only result in mishaps. We need to be keenly aware of how serious an undertaking it is.

Having a Husband Who Is Opposed to Faith

SUDA: I heard a wonderful experience by someone who succeeded in changing the karma of her family. Her name is Chieko Yamashita of Chiba Prefecture, and her story was also introduced in the *Seikyo Shimbun*.

Although she is president of a company that operates a bicycle parking lot of approximately 4,000 square yards, when asked what she does she simply smiles and says, “I’m just the bicycle lot grandma.”

IKEDA: I recall that she also has a private community center.

SUDA: That’s right. She achieved her dream of building a private community center. And you gave the center the name Yamashita Glory Community Center. When she received the calligraphy of these words written by you, she took the characters for community

center to mean treasure house. She was very moved by your consideration.

ENDO: Was her husband opposed to her practice?

SUDA: Yes. And it was no ordinary opposition either.

They were married in the tumultuous period following the end of the Second World War. Her husband then failed in business, and became obsessed with drinking and gambling.

She explains that eventually her family of four had no place to live, but were given shelter in the corner of a friend's kitchen. During the day, they would stay in a small park nearby, her infant child crawling around on the ground.

With help, they were able to find a tiny one-room apartment; but they were still destitute.

To make dinner, she would go out with two ten-yen coins and buy ten yen worth each of sardines and spinach. While shopping, the child she carried on her back would cry for some candy. Wishing that she had just ten more yen to buy some, she would search the crowded streets of the outdoor market for dropped coins. She says that she will never forget the bitter pain of not even having ten yen to spare.

IKEDA: I recall that Mrs. Yamashita was from a well-known family.

SUDA: That's right. She was born in Kagoshima, Kyushu, and apparently lacked for nothing while growing up. However, there was constant discord between her father and mother, and so, not wanting to end up the same way, she approached marriage with extreme caution. Nonetheless, as Mrs. Yamashita puts it, "I wound up having to suffer the same destiny as my mother."

She wound up leaving her husband and children. She would not have been able to watch the children



Everything is ultimately decided by the parents' faith. This is what is meant by "consistency from beginning to end." "Beginning," may be interpreted as the faith of the parents; and "end" the faith of the children.

and work at the same time, and, as her parents had died shortly after the war, she couldn't ask for their assistance. She couldn't rely on the help of her husband's family either, and her children, a boy and a girl, were put into childcare. But they were placed in separate facilities. Overcome with anguish at the thought of this, she decided to gather her children and return to her husband. What followed were days of living in fear of physical abuse.

ENDO: I hope that nowadays, someone in the same situation would have more options.

SAITO: At that point she had not yet taken faith.

SUDA: Mrs. Yamashita joined the Soka Gakkai in 1965. At the time her husband was unemployed and she was supporting him by

selling insurance door-to-door. Her husband joined the Soka Gakkai as well, but only in name, and instead went to extraordinary lengths to keep his wife from practicing.

Every night he would beat her with whatever objects might be handy, demanding that she quit the Soka Gakkai. When he was drunk, he would rail on and on against her faith.

On one occasion, he destroyed her altar with an ax, doused the wood with kerosene and set it on fire. She ran out of the house barefoot, clutching the Gohonzon to her chest. She spent the night locked outdoors chanting daimoku until dawn.

Eventually her husband found work as a subcontractor for a major glass company. But he was reckless with his income and they continued to live in poverty.

Throughout this time, Mrs. Yamashita scrimped and saved with the dream of one day having a house. But when she had finally saved four million yen and



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The story of the one-eyed turtle refers to the extraordinary difficulty of encountering the true Law. There are infinite life forms in the universe. Among all of these, we possess the good fortune to have been born as human beings who are able to pray to the Gohonzon, an opportunity so rare that it might only be encountered once in a thousand, ten thousand or a million years.

gleefully showed her savings passbook to her husband, he snatched it away from her. When she located the passbook in the apartment two days later, her account had a balance of zero. He had thrown all the money away at the racetrack.

Mrs. Yamashita remarked that her senior in faith told her that she was the one who must take ultimate responsibility for her own happiness. She was told, “Unless you change, you will not be able to accumulate good fortune.”

She says that “When I heard this, I made up my mind to not give up.”

“The Daishonin says, ‘Buddhism is like the body, and society like the shadow. When the body bends, so does the shadow’ (WND, 1039). I determined to stop swinging between joy and sorrow because of the chaos in my life and to stop complaining about what my husband was or wasn’t doing. I decided that since this was my karma, I would take responsibility for overcoming it myself. I would accumulate good fortune. I realized that it was not about anyone else; everything depended on my life condition. I gained profound conviction in the principle of the oneness of life and the environment.”

IKEDA: That’s the kind of determination we need to have! Once we understand that everything that happens to us enables us to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime, all of our problems will be resolved.

On the other hand, the more we tend to complain and put the blame on others, the longer we are delay-

ing the transformation of our karma.

If we pray to the Gohonzon through all our sufferings and sorrows and firmly resolve that: “This is my destiny. This is my life. I will do my human revolution first and foremost,” then a path forward will open without fail.

Appreciation for Those Who Oppose Our Faith

SUDA: I think that’s really true.

Realizing that feeling sorry for herself wouldn’t do anything to bring her good fortune, Mrs. Yamashita exerted herself wholeheartedly in Soka Gakkai activities. In the process, she was unexpectedly approached about managing some land in front of the train station. In her seventh year of practice, 1972, she was able to open her bicycle parking lot.

More than anything else, Mrs. Yamashita’s attitude, her frame of mind, began to change. She came to have sympathy for her husband because he did not understand the joy of faith, and began praying every day that he would change his ways. She came to view her husband as a truly “good friend” for enabling her to deepen her faith.

She explains: “It’s amazing. As soon as my resentment toward my husband turned into appreciation he suddenly lost his infatuation with gambling. And he began to pray to the Gohonzon.”

In 1976, Mrs. Yamashita’s husband was diagnosed with cancer of the esophagus. Her prayer to the Gohonzon was: “Please take half of my life and give it to my husband. Let us fight for kosen-rufu together.” Of that time, she says: “I wept at the love and appreciation I now felt for the man it seemed I had cared nothing for. I realized in the depths of my life for the first time that until then I lacked compassion.”

When she went to see him at the hospital, her husband, who had not moved from the bed, sat right up. Soon he was able to get out of bed on his own, and, as Mrs. Yamashita describes, “For the first time we became a true married couple, able to talk openly and honestly about anything, about kosen-rufu and the Soka Gakkai.”

Her husband began to study Buddhism insatiably. The following year, as though he had completed his mission, he passed away. Seeing his beautiful countenance in death, two close friends decided to take faith, too.

“Through all the negative and positive experiences, my husband taught me about faith. He was truly a

‘good friend.’ I have now grown into a person who can feel incredible appreciation, knowing that I owe everything to the terrible hardship I experienced.”

In addition to transforming her state of life, Mrs. Yamashita has transformed her financial fortune. As she puts it, “Money just keeps coming my way.” As was already mentioned, she has been able to realize her long-standing wish of building a private community center. And the friend who had once loaned the Yamashitas the small one-room apartment they lived in has marveled at how happy Mrs. Yamashita has become since joining the Soka Gakkai.

IKEDA: What a wonderful experience! I have heard much about her family. And I have met Mrs. Yamashita at Soka University.

Nothing brings me more joy than seeing how happy members have become through faith. It is what I live for. Everything else is secondary.

Ideally, I would like to meet with each and every member and thank and encourage them. That is how I truly feel. However, as I am but one person, that is simply not possible. But I live each day praying with my entire being to the Gohonzon with that wish in my heart.

I hope therefore that each and every leader will kindly and warmly care for the members in my stead; for they are all children of the Buddha.

Uncrowned Heroes Who Serve the People

IKEDA: Leaders have no right to scold members. They should only serve and treasure them.

If you must be arrogant, then be arrogant toward the powerful. If you must scold someone, then scold those who are evil and malicious. Leaders who cause their members to suffer are despicable. Leaders who lack compassion and consideration toward their fellow members cannot attain Buddhahood. Leaders who treat the Buddha’s children with malice and spite will receive negative effects from their causes.

Each day, from morning to night, I am completely at the service of the people. That’s the way it should be. I believe that this is the most noble way to live.

We are discussing King Wonderful Adornment. He is a king adorned with the wonderful benefit of the Mystic Law.

[In “The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings”

Nichiren Daishonin says: “The benefits of the Mystic Law are used to adorn the six sense organs” (GZ, 779).]

We do not adorn ourselves with the trappings of power. Those who decorate themselves with authority, wealth, honor or fame, are examples of the evil King Wonderful Adornment before he took faith in the Mystic Law. But when we discard these shallow adornments and dedicate ourselves to faith in the knowledge that there is no greater treasure than the Mystic Law, we become a good King Wonderful Adornment. An uncrowned king is the most noble of all.

There are those who become leaders and then, after gaining fame or recognition in society thanks to the SGI, grow arrogant, making something other than faith the most important thing in their lives. Such a person is functioning as a devil.

SAITO: I really think that vanity is the enemy of faith.

Problems Are a Part of Life

ENDO: For example, some leaders are ashamed that they have problems, and avoid seeking guidance.

SUDA: There are indeed some who may look disparagingly at someone with problems and think, “And he calls himself a leader!”

IKEDA: Everyone has problems. We are all ordinary people, and it is because we suffer that we practice Buddhism. Such problems as having a child who refuses to go to school, or a husband who doesn’t work hard, or a family member who has fallen ill, all exist so that we may advance in our lives. This is the Buddhist principle of “earthly desires are enlightenment.”

No one is perfect, and leaders are no exception. To try to be something we are not in order to make ourselves look good only results in suffering for oneself and does nothing for others.

It’s important to be ourselves, and to be able to say in all humility: “I have this problem. But I will overcome it. I will exert myself in SGI activities and show proof of my human revolution. This is my situation, but I hope we can work together for kosen-rufu.” The important thing is that we become happy in the end. It is only a matter of course that we will be beset with various obstacles along the way.

Suppose there is something wrong with your child. You will not have peace of mind. But you can’t die and escape the situation either. That’s why we have to do

our best. That's what is meant by transforming earthly desires into enlightenment.

If there are those who want to make snide comments about your having problems even though you are practicing or even though you are a leader, then let them. They are the ones who will receive retribution, whereas your negative karma will be erased in like measure.

The important thing is that our lives glow and that we live freely in a manner true to ourselves. This is what is meant by "the wisdom to illuminate and manifest the true nature of all phenomena." We need to cause our lives to shine.

Those who put on airs are so out of touch that they don't even realize their own absurdity.

To live in envy of others is a life based on pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. The Lotus Sutra teaches that we live determined to follow our own path. Faith means to achieve victory in life based on who we truly are, not a made-up image of ourselves. This is the teaching of the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter.

Appreciation Leads to Great Benefit

The two sons then addressed their father and mother, saying: "Excellent, father and mother! And we beg you in due time to go to the place where the Buddha Cloud Thunder Sound Constellation King Flower Wisdom is, attend him in person and offer alms. Why? Because encountering the Buddha is as difficult as encountering the udumbara flower. Or as difficult as it is for a one-eyed turtle to encounter a floating log with a hole in it. We have been blessed with great good fortune from past existences and so have been born in an age where we can encounter the Buddha's Law." (LS27, 315)

SAITO: To continue on with the story in this chapter, when the sons hear their father, King Wonderful Adornment, resolves to hear the Buddha, they announce that they will renounce their royal status and devote themselves to Buddhist practice. They do this because "the Buddha is difficult to encounter" (LS27, 315).

SUDA: There is the famous passage here that says that encountering the Buddha is "as difficult as it is for a one-eyed turtle to encounter a floating log with a hole in it" (LS27, 315).

[The Daishonin explains this analogy as follows: There is a turtle that lives at the bottom of the ocean. Once

in a thousand years he can rise to the ocean's surface in hopes of finding a floating sandalwood log on which to float. But the log has to have a hollow that is just the right size to hold him. Also, because the turtle has only one eye, he cannot judge distances, making it difficult for him to reach a log that he happens to see. This analogy is used to describe the difficulty of encountering the Mystic Law. (cf. WND, 957).]

IKEDA: There are infinite life forms in the universe. The earth, and even the smallest garden, is home to countless living entities. Among all of these, we possess the good fortune to have been born as human beings. What's more, we are able to pray to the Gohonzon, an opportunity so rare that it might only be encountered once in a thousand, ten thousand or a million years.

Moreover, we have been given life right in the midst of world kosen-rufu. How deep are our karmic bonds! What an immense mission we possess! There are no coincidences in Buddhism. Truly, as the sutra says, "We have been blessed with great good fortune from past existences and so have been born in an age where we can encounter the Buddha's Law" (LS27, 315). To live aware of this solemn fact is the greatest pleasure. It is to overflow with joy.

We should carry out faith single-mindedly, regarding each day as a treasure. When we practice with such excitement and enthusiasm, we receive benefit at once. The two brothers in the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter express their determination to practice single-minded faith.

To spend one's life idling away time, never awakening to one's mission, is to be like a living corpse. The Daishonin admonishes us, "You must not spend your lives in vain and regret it for ten thousand years to come" (WND, 622).

The Power of Women and Youth

ENDO: King Wonderful Adornment goes to see the Buddha, taking his ranks of ministers and attendants along with him. He is joined by Queen Pure Virtue and the two princes, along with all of their respective attendants.

All the residents of the entire palace convert to Buddhism. Hearing the Buddha preach, the king is "exceedingly delighted" (LS27, 316), and he makes sincere offerings to the Buddha. The Buddha predicts the king's future enlightenment, telling him he will become a Buddha named Sal Tree King.

The king then turns over his kingdom to his younger brother and, with his entire family, dedicates himself wholeheartedly to practicing the way.

SAITO: With this, it could be said, the entire country changes from a land of erroneous views to a land of justice.

SUDA: This is kosen-rufu.

IKEDA: In this story, the mother and children enable the father, who is in a position of authority, to mend his ways. In other words, a woman and youth stand up and accomplish kosen-rufu. A leader with political and financial power who upholds erroneous views that oppose the Law represents the negative aspect of King Wonderful Adornment. By contrast, the members of the SGI, who are without such political and financial power, can be likened to the queen Pure Virtue and her children Pure Storehouse and Pure Eye.

The Soka Gakkai began with absolutely nothing amid fierce storms of opposition. Solely through the power of the Mystic Law, we have shown actual proof, demonstrated the power of the people and the strength of unit, and progressed in reforming the erroneous views of society.

ENDO: That is what I call miraculous.

SUDA: It is an example of “supernatural ability.”

IKEDA: If this were something that anyone could do,

there would be no need for faith. Faith in the Mystic Law is what enables us to achieve the impossible.

ENDO: The sutra says that the king went on to practice the Lotus Sutra for 84,000 years. This could also mean overcoming the so-called 84,000 earthly desires. I think it indicates that he thoroughly adorns his life with the benefit of the Mystic Law, which teaches the principle of transforming earthly desires into enlightenment.

The king addresses the Buddha, saying, “These two sons have been good friends to me. They wished to awaken the good roots from my past existences and to enrich and benefit me, and for that reason they were born into my household” (LS27, 316–17).

IKEDA: He has become a person who truly appreciates his children.

Family Members Are All “Good Friends”

SAITO: Isn’t the gist of the Lotus Sutra’s teaching on the family that one’s family members are “good friends”? They are good friends who help us deepen our faith and develop our humanity. In early Buddhist texts, too, we find such statements as, “Your wife is your foremost friend”⁶ and “The mother is a friend to her family.”⁷

IKEDA: Being members of the same family implies a deep karmic relationship. Speaking of his own family,



Among the countless forms of life in the universe, we have been given life right in the midst of world kosen-rufu. As the sutra says, “We have been blessed with great good fortune from past existences and so have been born in an age where we can encounter the Buddha’s Law” (LS27, 315).

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the Daishonin says, “It is no doubt because of karmic forces that they became my parents, and I, their child” (WND, 993). And with regard to marriage, he says, “This is not a matter of this life alone” (WND, 501).

Since we became a family because of a profound connection, we should help one another become happy as good friends. A family whose members share the lofty goal of *kosen-rufu* and who support one another, help each other and enable each other to grow, is a creative family and a source of personal growth. A home should not be uninviting and closed off from the outside world like a fortress, but an open home that contributes to the community and society aiming to achieve lofty ideals.

ENDO: Speaking of karmic relationships, there is an interesting account about the members of King Wonderful Adornment’s family. This is from T’ien-t’ai’s *Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.⁸

In the past, there were four Buddhists practicing austerities in the latter day of a particular Buddha. But they had nothing to eat and became deadlocked. At that time, one of the four said, “This will not work. I will take care of providing us with food so that the three of you can focus on your Buddhist practice.” And that is what they did.

Thanks to the efforts of the one, the other three were able to attain Buddhahood, accumulating benefit that endured for countless lifetimes. The benefit of the one whose efforts made it possible for the other three was that in every lifetime he became a king; but his benefit did not continue indefinitely. Eventually he was bound to fall into a state of suffering.

Seeing this, the three got together to discuss the situation: “Since we have attained enlightenment thanks to him, we must help him. But now he has become attached to desires and holds erroneous views. The only way to help him will be to persuade him through the power of family love.” They decided that one of them would become his beautiful wife, and the other two would become his wise sons. In this way they became the royal family and led the king to happiness.

IKEDA: That’s very interesting.

At the end of the story, T’ien-t’ai explains that Pure Virtue is the bodhisattva Wonderful Sound, who is present in the assembly where Shakyamuni expounds the Lotus Sutra; and that the king’s sons are the bodhisattvas Medicine King and Medicine Superior. The king is Bodhisattva Flower Virtue. This is a family

bound together over the three existences of past, present and future—united as good friends.

Life is wondrous. From where have human beings come and to where do we go? These questions cannot be answered by science, politics or economics. Only Buddhism can resolve them.

Take someone who has a wonderful family or a wonderful partner. Yes, the person seems happy. But, there is no escaping the four sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death. At some point they will have to say good-bye. This is the “suffering of having to part from those one loves.”

But if we believe in the Mystic Law, then we can be together with our loved ones in lifetime after lifetime. Sometimes we may be related as parent and child, other times as husband and wife, other times as siblings or close friends. While the relationships may take various forms, we can be confident that we will be born near each other again and again. As the sutra says, this is “so that together [we] may reach the place where the treasure is” (LS7, 141). The Mystic Law is truly amazing. This principle is taught to us by King Wonderful Adornment’s family.

If, on the other hand, we never want to see the person again, then of course we will not have to be born together with them! We are completely free in this regard.

On Divorce

SUDA: Getting stuck with someone you never want to see again is to experience the “suffering of having to meet with those whom one hates.” It happens sometimes that people who fall in love and get married reach a point where they can’t stand the sight of each other! Such conflict may result in divorce, but in some situations it might be best to look at the problem as one’s karma. Should married couples work hard at changing their karma by staying together?

IKEDA: This is something that only the people involved can decide. No one else has the right to say that anyone either should or should not get divorced. Nor can anyone say a person has no faith because they are divorced. Divorce is a matter of personal choice.

Whether people get divorced or not, the important thing is that they become happy, that they do their human revolution. Whether someone is married or not, has children or not, of utmost importance is

happiness. This is what faith is about. For happiness exists within our own life.

We are born alone and we die alone. We live so that we may transform ourselves in this lifetime. That's why we need to do our best, regarding those around us as "good friends" who help us develop our faith and viewing everything we do as part of our Buddhist practice.

Someone once asked President Toda this question: "Things are not going very well between my husband and me. Should I try to stick it out? Or do you think I ought to consider getting separated?" He replied, "I can't tell you what to do about your marriage. I can neither tell you not to get divorced, nor to get divorced. The only thing I can say is that unless you break through your karma to have such a husband, then, even if you do separate, you are bound to experience the same kind of suffering in the future. And if you're going to have to go through the same suffering anyway, then perhaps it's not too late to do something about it in your present marriage."⁹

ENDO: Personally, I think that where children are concerned, parents should carefully consider their options if their decision could cause the children suffering.

SAITO: President Ikeda, you once told someone in answer to a question: "Whether people stay married or get divorced is a private issue, and it is up to them to decide. But it is important to remember that building one's happiness on the misfortune of others is not the way of Buddhism. This should be the basis for consideration."

IKEDA: It's ideal if the parents of a child get along well. But if they don't and end up in divorce, that doesn't necessarily mean that the child will turn out badly. There are many cases where children grow into fine, upstanding people precisely because of such hardships.

SUDA: There are also people who get remarried and become happier than ever.

IKEDA: The bottom line is that we must look at ourselves closely and do our human revolution in the place we are now. Then we must make our own decisions.

As long as we have rock-solid faith, we will become happy without fail. No matter what happens, as long as we have the faith to continue advancing toward the achievement of kosen-rufu without giving up our practice, we will be victorious in the end. This is what we need to understand.

SUDA: I see.



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Most divorces impact only the immediately family. The church's refusal to grant a divorce to Henry VIII caused the king to declare himself head of the Church of England and split with Roman Catholicism. Above, "Divorce of Henry VIII" by Eugene Deveria.

IKEDA: But if people do get divorced, rather than brooding over the past, it would be wonderful if they could look at the experience as a valuable lesson and work for kosen-rufu even harder than before. And I would hope that those around them would provide warm support. I also hope that those who are in single-parent families will not feel lonely, but will instead open their hearts and expand their circle of friends.

The fact is that most marriages are not 100 percent successful. Some have gone so far as to say that ninety-nine percent of all marriages are unsuccessful!

In reality, many families who appear to have everything going for them actually have many problems. It was the French essayist Montaigne who said "There is scarcely less vexation in the government of a family than of an entire state."¹⁰

ENDO: Isn't it healthy for couples to quarrel?

IKEDA: Having the energy to argue is a sign of good health! When the two people in a relationship share

similar conditions, it is only natural that they will lock horns from time to time. On the other hand, if one party begins to outgrow the other, then the two will probably not have serious confrontations, because their states of life are so different.

It would be great if we could live cheerfully, enjoying life to the extent that we regard our partner's nagging as a sign of his or her good health and proof that he or she is still alive and kicking. When we develop a broad state of life, then even our partner's ranting and raving will sound like the sweet song of a bird.

Patience Is the Key to Happiness

IKEDA: At any rate, the important thing is love and compassion. From that understanding all a couple can do is chant daimoku

together with their sights set on a lofty goal and strive for true happiness.

Even married people were once strangers. Without patience and the effort to understand one another, things are not likely to go well. Patience is necessary for a couple to live together, earn a living, protect their home and educate their children while dedicating themselves for the sake of others.

We need patience in order to become happy. There are many who dream about happiness without being patient. But that is merely a dream; it is a fairy tale. It is to wish for a childish, easy life. This illusion breaks up many marriages. The pursuit of such happiness can only end in misery.



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Parents should become friends to their children and listen to what they have to say. While it may be okay for a mother to keep after her children, it's not a good idea for a father to yell unreasonably at his children. If both parents scold a child at the same time, that leaves the child with nowhere to turn. Above, "Mother and Child" by Mary Cassatt.

It is important to make steady efforts to construct something together. From there, real love develops. Real love means wanting to live with the other person throughout eternity. Real marriage is when you have been married for twenty-five years and feel an even deeper love than you did when you first met. Love deepens. Love that does not is merely on the level of simple likes and dislikes.

SUDA: Patience is necessary for happiness. This is a key point.

IKEDA: Daily life is reality. Therefore, it is necessary that we earn an income to support our families, and it is important for a couple to listen to each other. Men in particular should listen to what women have to say. It is also important for a couple to compliment and praise each other. It could be for anything—praising one another is

what matters. Nothing comes from pointing out the other person's faults. That's just foolishness.

All It Takes Is One "Sun"

IKEDA: One person in the family must decide to brighten the home. We have to decide, "As long as I'm around, any situation will be a bright one." If we become a "sun," there will be no darkness wherever we go in the world. If there is one person in the home who is like the sun, the entire family will be illuminated.

All we need to do is become people overflowing with good fortune who share their boundless fortune with their families. If that is our conviction, then our families will surely embrace faith as well.

In the event that only one person in a family practices, he or she will be protected on all sides by the four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth—Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, Pure Practices and Firmly Established Practices. In addition, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions as well as all protective functions in the universe will join forces and protect the person and the person’s entire family. There is no need to feel lonely. The important thing is not to grow impatient, but to be considerate of the feelings of others, thus leading them to Buddhism.

We must not be judgmental. If we give up on the person we are trying to share faith with because it is difficult, we will only inhibit the person’s growth. It will inhibit our own growth as well. Rather, we should pray wholeheartedly that, “This person will change”; “Since he possesses Buddhahood within, it is sure to blossom in time. I will bring it to bloom.”

If one’s parents do not practice, then rather than getting frustrated, it is more valuable to decide, for example, “If Dad won’t chant, I’ll chant enough for the both of us.”

Regarding his own parents the Daishonin says, “Before I die, I will transfer the great blessings deriving from my practice to my parents who gave me life” (WND, 402). There are many interpretations, but I think the Daishonin is teaching us that we should have the desire to enable our parents to take faith while they are still alive.

ENDO: And if they should die without taking faith?

IKEDA: Since we are reborn quickly after we die, there’s nothing to worry about! Life is eternal, and daimoku will reach them without fail.

Anyway, we will be better off if we look at everything that happens as moving in a positive direction.

Raising Children Who Love the SGI

SUDA: How do we encourage our children to take faith in Buddhism?

IKEDA: The most important thing is to help them learn to respect and love the SGI without pressuring them. Since faith is a lifetime issue, it’s enough that they develop their understanding over time. It’s probably not wise to be inflexible and try to force them to practice.

We need to teach our children the spirit to cherish and protect the SGI. I hope parents will raise their children to really love the SGI. If children have that spirit, they will absolutely become fine people. To boast about one’s children without teaching them this spirit is the attitude of the Mother of Demon Children who is depicted in the Lotus Sutra.

SAITO: Unfortunately, in some cases, the children of senior leaders or of members who are celebrities do not participate in Gakkai activities. If parents are making it appear as though they are working for kosen-rufu, while at home they speak ill of and criticize their fellow members, and especially if they arrogantly belittle the SGI, it will be acutely reflected in their children.

SUDA: One high school student remarked, “After my mom gets a phone call about activities, she always lets out a sigh. It doesn’t seem like she is enjoying her practice. Is it okay to have that kind of faith?” Fortunately in this case, the child knew that there was once a time when the mother practiced enthusiastically.

IKEDA: Of course, the failure of children to practice cannot necessarily be attributed to a problem with the faith of the parents. We have to view children in the long term. It is not uncommon for those considered to be problem children to turn out to be thoughtful and down-to-earth.

However, the bottom line is that everything is ultimately decided by the parents’ faith. In particular—and I say this based on the experiences of hundreds of thousands of people—the faith of the mother is crucial. This is what is meant by “consistency from beginning to end.” “Beginning,” may be interpreted as the faith of the parents; and “end” the faith of the children. There is essentially no separation between the two.

It is up to us to demonstrate through our example the spirit of treasuring the Gohonzon and the SGI, which is dedicated to kosen-rufu. As long as we have such a spirit, everything will work out in the end.

If parents practice joyfully, consequently receiving great benefit as they advance, their children will naturally understand. No matter how we might treasure and pamper our children, it will all count for nothing if we do not teach them this spirit. To raise decent human beings is no easy task.

If people ridicule the SGI even inwardly—the organization dedicated to realizing the Buddha’s intent

and decree—they will come to be ridiculed by their family and those around them.

Earlier we talked about “good friends.” It is important to choose wisely the people with whom we associate. If we wish to seek the correct Law, we need to seek the right person. If we get involved with the wrong people, then no matter how hard we practice, we will not gain benefit. Herein lies the profound significance of the SGI.

At any rate, when it comes to faith it is important that parents wisely guide their children. It is also helpful to ask for the support of the youth division leaders responsible for future division activities.

When it comes to matters other than faith, too, I hope that parents will be friends to their children and listen to what they have to say. In particular, while it may be okay for a mother to keep after her children, it’s not a good idea for a father to shout at them. It’s also important to note that if both parents scold a child at the same time, that leaves the child with nowhere to turn.

ENDO: It’s crucial to listen to children. Reflecting on my own situation, I can see that there have been times when I have allowed my busy schedule to keep me from listening to my own children.

IKEDA: I recall the case of a woman who was the only person practicing in her family. Her husband was always condemning the Soka Gakkai. But she took it all and held it inside, never complaining to her children. She felt that grumbling to her children would only make them think that their parents were fighting over her faith.

She quietly took all of her sufferings to the Gohonzon, praying by herself each day. Her children eventually grew up and awakened to faith. They realized that they were able to take faith because of the diligent prayers of their mother.

Sharing Our Hearts With Our Children

ENDO: What about children who are lonely because their parents are always off doing SGI activities?

IKEDA: The issue is whether or not parents have the children’s respect. I hope parents share their feelings about SGI activities by explaining that they are striving

for the benefit of others and society. This way children can feel proud of their parents.

It is also vital that children know their parents love them, so that they realize the reason their parents are working so hard is precisely because of that love. I hope parents will be considerate of their children.

When there is no time, we should be diligent in leaving notes or communicating by phone. We should also use wisdom to come up with ways to spend time with our children. It’s about letting our children know we care. Even just making a point to look in their eyes each morning and exchange kind words can make a difference.

ENDO: Having the time doesn’t necessarily mean that things will go well, does it? There are some cases where a gulf exists between parent and child even though they spend time together.

IKEDA: Sometimes not having that much time together can keep the relationship fresh and exciting.

SUDA: I have also heard some men complaining about being left alone because their wives are always out doing activities.

SAITO: I’m sure that husbands who do not practice probably feel that the SGI has taken their family from them. I imagine they would like to be paid more attention to.

ENDO: That’s why treasuring those family members who don’t practice is important.

Respect and Appreciate All Family Members

IKEDA: Even a little consideration goes a long way. When visiting or calling a member on the phone, we should be courteous and attentive to even the smallest concerns of their family members, particularly if the family is not practicing.

SUDA: And it’s always important to be pleasant when calling members at home.

IKEDA: Whether practicing or not, people should be respected. We mustn’t judge people based on their level of involvement in Gakkai activities or their degree of practice. Such judgements should be completely done away with, and we should use common sense in our encounters with people, treating everyone with sincerity and respect.

Even if someone is the only one in the family practicing, it is because of the other family members that the person is able to do activities. Thanks to the support of one's spouse, parents or in-laws, for example, one can go out and participate in activities with peace of mind. We should respect and have appreciation toward those who make it possible for SGI members to practice.

Just like the past lifetime of the family of King Wonderful Adornment, SGI activities are often made possible because there are other family members taking care of the family's finances and the home. Looking at it in this way, one cannot help but have respect and appreciation for those people.

Of course, great benefit accrues to family members as well. Buddhism is vast and encompassing.

SAITO: President Ikeda, I recall your having once honored the fathers of youth division members with titles of "honorary chapter leader" and "honorary area leader." At first, I was surprised at this.

But you said to the leaders in charge, "Please present them with the title after clearly explaining the immense responsibilities of a chapter or area leader, and how many people such a leader has to look after."

This left a deep impression on one of the youth division members. I heard him say, "President Ikeda taught me to respect and appreciate my father as a human being, as the man who has raised me."

IKEDA: Family is family. We must not divide people into categories of member and non-member. Also, it is ridiculous to bring organizational positions into the home. If a public prosecutor went home with the attitude of a public prosecutor, the family would suffocate.

SUDA: The other day, President Ikeda, you discussed an episode of Britain's Queen Victoria in a speech. On one occasion the queen and her husband had a fight, and her husband shut himself up in his room. Intending to apologize, the queen knocked on the door and said, "This is the Queen. Please open up." But he would not comply. Each time she came to the door, he asked, "Who's there?" To which she replied, "The Queen." And he would not open the door. But when in response to "Who's there," she replied, "Your wife," he opened the door right away. I think that this episode gets at the subtleties of human nature.

IKEDA: When visiting a member at home, I think it's wise to greet the other family members with sincerity



Having the spirit to argue can be a sign of good health. Above, Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert.

and respect. Small things are important.

Earlier we talked about a husband feeling left out. Suppose the wife of this man receives a call from a fellow member while she is preparing dinner. Unless it's something urgent, she could ask the caller if she can call back shortly, and then do so after dinner. I don't think her husband would have a problem with this.

But if she were to drop everything and give priority to the phone call and treat her husband as secondary to her activities, then it would probably not be unreasonable for him to feel somewhat bitter. If this kind of thing were to happen repeatedly, it would naturally drive them apart. A little consideration actually goes a long way.

SUDA: There are some people who think only of themselves, forgetting about the feelings of their family who have taken care of things around the house while they were out doing activities. Some people, on returning home from a meeting, simply say, "I'm tired" or "I still have some calls to make," or they ramble on about their exciting day, without asking about anyone else.

Assuming That Things Will Somehow Work Out Is Not Faith

IKEDA: It's really important to take into account people's individual circumstances and living conditions.

For example, Japan is presently in a recession. In many families, the husband has to concentrate solely on his work to make ends meet for his family. Under



Behrman/CORBIS

Many families which appear to have everything going for them actually have many problems. It was the French essayist Michel De Montaigne who said, "There is scarcely less vexation in the government of a family than of an entire state."

such circumstances, there are some cases when the wife needs to encourage her husband to chant daimoku and then focus on doing his best at work. There are also some instances when she may need to encourage him to exert himself fully in activities and thereby accumulate good fortune.

We need to judge these situations wisely.

Reality is harsh. The worst thing is to be irresponsible. To think that things will somehow work out just because we are practicing Buddhism is a misunderstanding of faith. After we pray for something, we need to struggle with all our might to actualize it. This is true faith.

To win in society by showing proof is the way to achieve victory in the family and the path to kosen-rufu. With the attitude to make the impossible possible, we must pray "as earnestly as though to produce fire from damp wood, or to obtain water from parched ground" (WND, 444); we must win. This is what is meant by "supernatural ability." It is through this kind of effort that we will win the trust of society.

At the end of the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter, the king makes the following pledge to the Buddha, "From this day on I will no longer follow the

whims of my own mind, nor will I give way to heretical views or to arrogance, anger, or other evil states of mind" (LS27, 317). This shows how this person of power has changed.

Although he had been unable to recognize the true teaching because of his own selfishness, egoism, arrogance and feelings of jealousy, through the struggles of his wife and sons he awakens to the true teaching. He is transformed from a person who lives only for himself into a person who lives for the people.

A New "Age of Philosophy"

IKEDA: The "king" represents the political arena. In a broader sense, he represents economics and other workings of society. But the "King Wonderful Adornment" chapter teaches that these things alone do not bring happiness; a correct philosophy is necessary.

Politics and economics are means. The end is human happiness. To achieve this end, what is needed most is a philosophy that can answer the questions: "What is life?" and "What is happiness, and how can it be achieved?"

In my opinion, the twenty-first century must become a profound "age of life," an "age of philosophy," going beyond the exigencies of politics and economics. We are pioneers of this transition. We are changing the "evil king," that is, all the negatives of society, into the positives of good "King Wonderful Adornment." And we are forging this path for the world to follow.

To be continued

1. Editor's Note: All quotations are from the newly published translation *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* (abbreviated as WND) (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1999), unless otherwise stated.

2. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1982), vol. 2, p. 300–301.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

4. Hajime Nakamura, *Genshi Bukkyo no Seikatsu Rinri* (Life Ethics of Early Buddhism), Nakamura Hajime Senshu (Selected Writings of Hajime Nakamura), vol. 17 (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1995), p. 254.

5. Editor's note: All quotations from the Lotus Sutra are from: *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For purposes of convenience, all citations from this work will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows: LS followed by the chapter number, and then the page number.

6. Nakamura Hajime Senshu, *Ibid.*, p. 197.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 292.

8. Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra (*Hokke Mongu*) by the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China, vol. 10.

9. *Toda Josei Zenshu* vol. 2, p. 283–84.

10. *The Macmillan Book of Proverbs, Maxims, and Famous Phrases*, ed. Burton Stevenson (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1948), p. 757.

(Continued from inside front cover)

- ❖ Work together with other religions to resolve issues affecting humanity
- ❖ Respect cultural diversity and promote cultural exchange
- ❖ Encourage the protection of nature and the environment

What We Do...

The principle activity for SGI-USA members is the neighborhood discussion meeting. These informal gatherings, held in members' homes, bring people together to practice Buddhism, to study Buddhist principles and discuss how they can best be applied to the challenges of daily life.

In addition, through youth activities, educational seminars and exhibits, we address urgent issues facing individuals and humanity. Non-sectarian activities have included:

Victory Over Violence: A grass-roots campaign to raise awareness about violence, its causes, and solutions. The program is expanding to schools and community organizations.

Religious Tolerance Through Dialogue: SGI-USA sponsors and participates in a number of local and national inter-religious conferences and symposia, including the Society for Buddhist Christian Studies (SBCS).

Education for a Culture of Peace: SGI-USA traveling exhibits are recognized for their ability to inform and to evoke a sense of responsibility toward important issues facing our planet. These have recently included exhibits on global children's rights, the environmental crisis, nuclear disarmament, and on the life of the great scientist and pacifist Linus Pauling.

The Earth Charter: SGI-USA members have sponsored more than thirty conferences involving some 1,800 participants to educate the American people about the international Earth Charter project, and participates in the Earth Charter USA Network, the project's national coordinating group.

Friendship Through Knowledge: An SGI-USA educational project that collected and shipped more than 14,000 books to schools and colleges in Ghana.

A Modern Heritage...

The founding Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was a Buddhist and an educator who asserted that the purpose of education should be development of people's ability to create "value" (i.e.,

improvement, beauty and social good) in their daily lives. The word *soka* means value creation. In pre-war Japan, where education focused on the training of workers and soldiers for the nation's growing military-industrial machine, Makiguchi's humane, student-focused views often brought him into conflict with the authorities. Arrested with other top Soka Gakkai leaders during World War II as a "thought criminal" for his unyielding opposition to Japanese militarism and government oppression of religion, 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 prison in July 1945, just weeks before the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Determined to rebuild the Soka Gakkai, Toda developed 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 helping people overcome suffering in the postwar chaos. Toda confirmed the Soka Gakkai's pacifist stance in 1957 by taking a strong, pioneering, public position against the use of nuclear weapons.

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

For more information visit our web site at www.sgi-usa.org

SGI-Affiliated Institutions

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

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

Soka University of America www.soka.edu

Soka University of Japan www.soka.ac.jp

Institute of Oriental Philosophy

Pacific Basin Research Center www.ap.harvard.edu

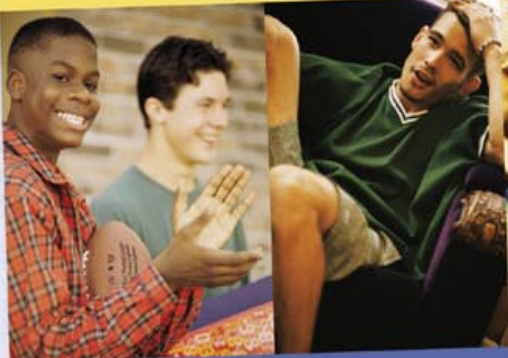
Tokyo Fuji Art Museum

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

The Way of Youth

Buddhist Common Sense for Handling Life's Questions

Daisaku Ikeda
Foreword by Duncan Sheik



Based on the popular "Discussions on Youth" series in the World Tribune, *The Way of Youth* brings together President Ikeda's responses to the questions of today's young people. Edited for a general audience, the book offers insights into a variety of issues of concern to today's young people, including how to build confidence and character, learning to live with and respect both yourself and others, finding true happiness, dealing with peer pressure and how to contribute to a positive, free and peaceful society. The book is sure to appeal to teens and their parents of all faiths.

"The book is an outstanding guide to humanity. I recommend it to all who desire to seek self-improvement."

— Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and Founding Director of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence

"Mr. Ikeda gives young people a way to function in the real world."

— Marion Collins, Principal, Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies

"This book was written with the hope that young people can perhaps benefit from the advice of someone like me, who has had a bit more experience than they have. Instead of sermons delivered by persons who claim to

have some superior kind of understanding, I hope readers will accept what I have written as advice from someone who has walked a little farther along the road of life."

— From the author's preface



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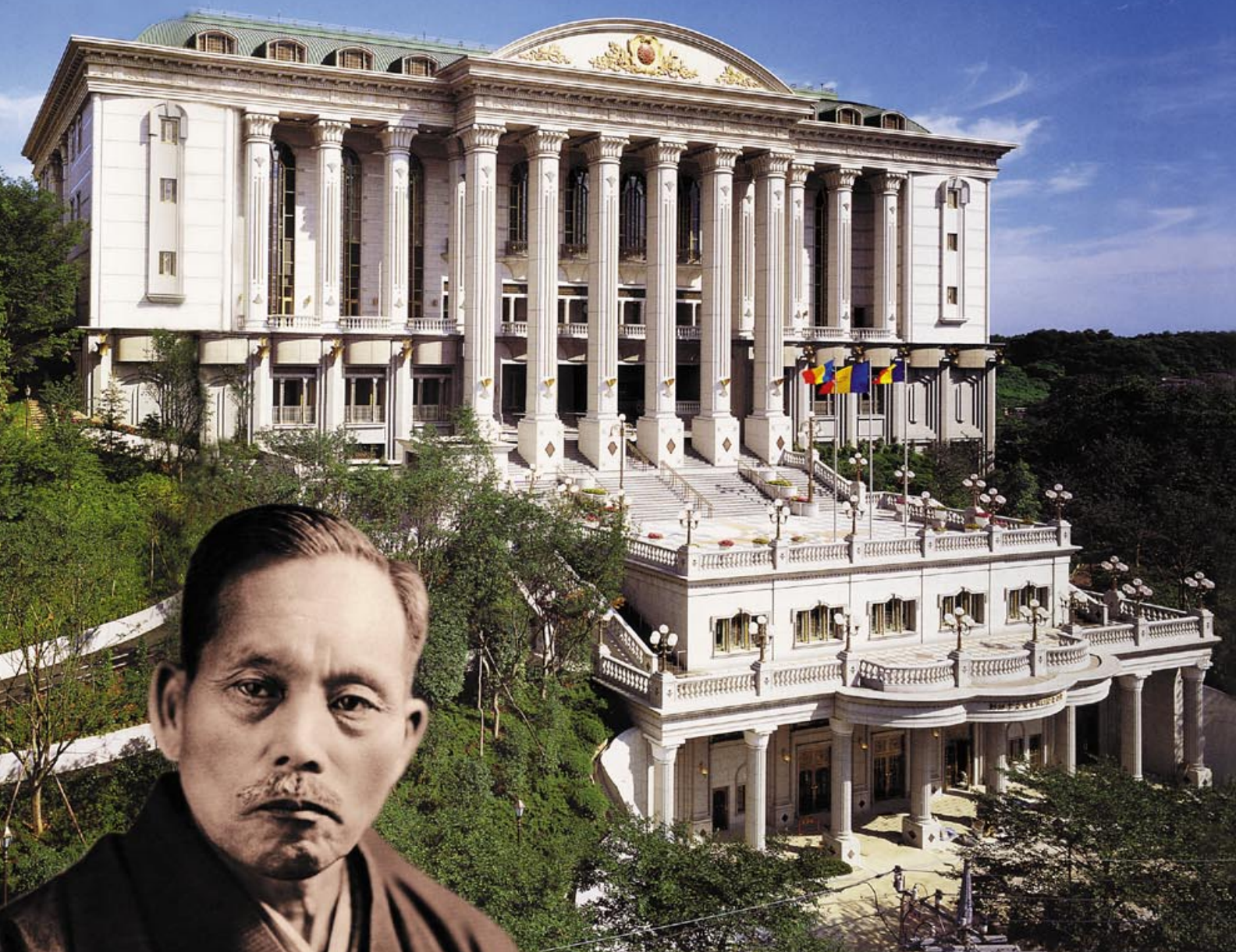
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THE FOUNDER OF VALUE-CREATION EDUCATION

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi: A Revolutionary Who Dedicated His Life to the Happiness of Students

CONVERSATIONS ON EDUCATION WITH FRIENDS FROM AROUND THE WORLD (3)

Showing Children Love and Trust



What Is the SGI & 'Living Buddhism' Magazine?

Building a Culture of Peace...

Living Buddhism is the monthly journal for Soka Gakkai International-USA (SGI-USA), an American Buddhist association that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the teachings of the Nichiren school of Buddhism. With seventy-one centers throughout the United States, SGI-USA is affiliated with the worldwide SGI organization, which has twelve million members in 163 countries, with its headquarters in Tokyo, Japan. Our members reflect a broad range of ethnic and social backgrounds, representing the diversity of our American society.

An Ancient Tradition...

The origins of SGI-USA's philosophy can be traced to the teachings of the Buddha, Shakyamuni, who lived some 2,500 years ago in what is present day India. Born Gautama Siddhartha, he abandoned his sheltered, princely life and sought instead to understand the inescapable sufferings all people share — birth, aging, sickness and death — and the means by which these sufferings could be overcome. He achieved at age 30 an awakening to the nature of life and the solution to these sufferings, and then traveled throughout India for 50 years, sharing the wisdom he had discovered. Shakyamuni's intuitive realization of a universal Law (Skt: *Dharma*) eternally permeating all life is most succinctly articulated in the Lotus Sutra, widely considered his most definitive teaching. Here the existence of the innate and universal reality, an essential enlightened nature, is revealed as being inherent in all life. The Lotus Sutra affirms that the realities of daily living provide both motivation and opportunity for spiritual transformation.

One of the most significant proponents of the Lotus Sutra was the 13th-century Japanese reformer, Nichiren Daishonin, who, the late religious scholar Masaharu Anesaki wrote, "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."

In one of his earliest writings, Nichiren Daishonin

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."

Nichiren taught all the workings of the universe embody a single principle or Law, a "mystic truth," which he expressed as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. He set forth a Buddhist practice of chanting this phrase to place one's life into harmony with that universal principle. In this way, he taught, people can unlock boundless hidden potential and transform the inevitable sufferings of life into sources of growth and fulfillment.

What We Believe...

Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International, writes, "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."

Our Buddhist philosophy is expressed in the concept of "human revolution," a process of inner transformation arrived at through Buddhist practice. It is a process by which we develop character; cultivate wisdom, courage, and compassion; and come to live and act for the happiness of others and the betterment of society as well as for personal fulfillment.

The SGI Charter, adopted in 1995, voices our beliefs and aims. These are to:

- ❖ Promote an understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism
- ❖ Contribute to peace, culture and education within society
- ❖ Safeguard fundamental human rights and eliminate discrimination
- ❖ Respect and protect freedom of religion and religious expression

(Continued on inside back cover)