FROM 'MY DEAR FRIENDS IN AMERICA'
THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

'Buddhism calls a person who embodies the qualities of wisdom, courage and compassion, who strives without cease for the happiness of others, a bodhisattva,' SGI President Ikeda says. 'In this sense, it could be said that the bodhisattva provides an ancient precedent and modern exemplar of the global citizen.'

From SGI President Ikeda's lecture at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, June 13, 1996.

It is with profound emotion that I speak today at the college where the world-renowned philosopher John Dewey taught. The first president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, whose thinking is the founding spirit of Soka University, referenced with great respect the writings and ideas of Dewey in his 1930 work, *The System of Value-creating Pedagogy*.

My own interest in and commitment to education stem from my experiences during World War II. My four elder brothers were drafted and sent to the front; the eldest was killed in action in Burma. During the two or so years following the end of the war, my three surviving brothers returned one after another from the Chinese mainland. In their tattered uniforms, they were a truly pathetic sight. My parents were already aged; my father's pain and my mother's sadness were searing.

To the end of my days, I will never forget the disgust and anger with which my eldest brother, on leave from China, described the inhuman atrocities he had seen committed there by the Japanese army. I developed a deep hatred for war, its cruelty, stupidity and waste. In 1947, I encountered a superb educator, Josei Toda. Toda, together with his mentor, Makiguchi, was jailed for opposing Japan's wars of invasion. Makiguchi died in jail. Toda survived the two-year ordeal of imprisonment.

When, at 19, I learned of this, I instinctively knew that here was someone whose actions merited my trust. I determined to follow Toda as my mentor in life.

It was Toda's constant and impassioned plea that humanity could be liberated from the horrific cycles of war only by fostering new generations of people imbued with a profound respect for the sanctity of life. He therefore gave the highest possible priority to the work of education.

Education is a uniquely human privilege. It is the source of inspiration that enables us to become fully and truly human, to fulfill a constructive mission in life with composure and confidence.

The destination in the development of knowledge isolated from human concerns is the weaponry of mass destruction. At the same time, it is also knowledge that has made society comfortable and convenient, bringing industry and wealth. The fundamental task of education must be to ensure that knowledge serves to further the cause of human happiness and peace.

Education must be the propelling force for an eternally unfolding humanitarian quest. It is for this reason that I consider education the final and most crucially important undertaking of my life. This is also the reason I deeply concur with the view expressed by

Title: Thoughts On Education For Global Citizenship
Subject: World Tribune 06/22/01 n.3351 p.4 WT010622p04 New York, New York 06/13/96
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: 06/13/96 April Citizenship Education Encouragement Global Globalism Guidance Ikeda June Messages President Proposals Speeches Thoughts through Tribune World York

Teachers College president Arthur Levine that while education is perhaps the slowest means to social change, it is the only means.

Global society today faces a myriad of interlocking crises. These include the issues of war, environmental degradation, the North–South development gap and divisions among people based on differences of ethnicity, religion or language. The list is long and familiar, and the road to solutions may seem all too distant and daunting.

It is my view, however, that the root of all of these problems is our collective failure to make the human being — human happiness — the consistent focus and goal in all fields of endeavor. The human being is the point to which we must return and from which we must depart anew. What is required is a human transformation — a human revolution.

There are many areas of commonality in the thinking of Makiguchi and Dewey, and this is one of them. They shared an immovable conviction in the need for new modes of people-centered education. As Dewey put it, "Everything which is distinctly human is learned."

Dewey and Makiguchi were contemporaries. On opposite ends of the Earth, amidst the problems and dislocations of their newly industrializing societies, both wrestled with the task of laying a path toward a hope-filled future.

Greatly influenced by the views of Dewey, Makiguchi asserted that the purpose of education must be the lifelong happiness of learners. He further believed that true happiness is to be found in a life of value-creation. Put simply, value-creation is the capacity to find meaning, to enhance one's own existence and contribute to the well-being of others, under any circumstances. Makiguchi's philosophy of value-creation grew from the insights on the inner workings of life his study of Buddhism afforded him.

Both Dewey and Makiguchi looked beyond the limits of the nation-state to new horizons of human community. Both, it could be said, had a vision of global citizenship, of people capable of value-creation on a global scale.

What then, are the conditions for global citizenship? Over the past several decades, I have been privileged to meet and converse with many people from all walks of life, and I have given the matter some thought. Certainly, global citizenship is not determined merely by the number of languages one speaks or the number of countries to which one has traveled. 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.

I think I can state with confidence that the following are essential elements of global citizenship:

- The wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living.
- The courage not to fear or deny difference, but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures and to grow from encounters with them.
- The compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places.

The all-encompassing interrelatedness that forms the core of the Buddhist worldview can provide a basis, I feel, for the concrete realization of these qualities of wisdom, courage and compassion. The following scene from the Buddhist canon provides a beautiful visual metaphor for the interdependence and interpenetration of all phenomena.

Suspended above the palace of Indra, the Buddhist god who symbolizes the natural

Title: Thoughts On Education For Global Citizenship
Subject: World Tribune 06/22/01 n.3351 p.4 WT010622p04 New York, New York 06/13/96
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: 06/13/96 April Citizenship Education Encouragement Global Globalism Guidance Ikeda June Messages President Proposals Speeches Thoughts through Tribune World York

forces that protect and nurture life, is an enormous net. A brilliant jewel is attached to each of the knots of the net. Each jewel contains and reflects the image of all the other jewels in the net, which sparkles in the magnificence of its totality.

When we learn to recognize what Thoreau refers to as "the infinite extent of our relations," we can trace the strands of mutually supportive life and discover there the glittering jewels of our global neighbors. Buddhism seeks to cultivate wisdom grounded in this kind of empathetic resonance with all forms of life.

In the Buddhist view, wisdom and compassion are intimately linked and mutually reinforcing. Compassion in Buddhism does not involve the forcible suppression of our natural emotions, our likes and dislikes. Rather, it is the realization that even those whom we dislike have qualities that can contribute to our lives and can afford us opportunities to grow in our own humanity. Further, it is the compassionate desire to find ways of contributing to the well-being of others that gives rise to limitless wisdom.

Buddhism teaches that both good and evil are potentialities that exist in all people. Compassion consists in the sustained and courageous effort to seek out the good in all people, whoever they may be, however they may behave. It means striving, through sustained engagement, to cultivate the positive qualities in oneself and in others. Engagement, however, requires courage. There are all too many cases in which compassion, owing to a lack of courage, remains mere sentiment.

Buddhism calls a person who embodies these qualities of wisdom, courage and compassion, who strives without cease for the happiness of others, a bodhisattva. In this sense, it could be said that the bodhisattva provides an ancient precedent and modern exemplar of the global citizen.

The Buddhist canon includes the story of a contemporary of Shakyamuni, a woman by the name of Srimala, who dedicated herself to education, teaching others that the practice of the bodhisattva consists in encouraging, with maternal care, the ultimate potential for good within all people. Her vow is recorded thus: "If I see lonely people, people who have been jailed unjustly and have lost their freedom, people who are suffering from illness, disaster or poverty, I will not abandon them. I will bring them spiritual and material comfort."

In concrete terms, her practice consisted of the following:

- Encouraging others by addressing them with kindness and concern through dialogue (Skt *priyavacana*).
- Giving alms, or providing people with the things they require (Skt *dana*).
- Taking action on behalf of others (Skt *arthacarya*).
- Joining with others and working together with them (Skt *samanartha*).

Through these efforts she sought to realize her goal of bringing forth the positive aspects of those she encountered.

The practice of the bodhisattva is supported by a profound faith in the inherent goodness of people. Knowledge must be directed to the task of unleashing this creative, positive potential. This purposefulness can be likened to the skill that enables one to make use of the precision instruments of an airplane to reach a destination safely and without incident.

For this reason, the insight to perceive the evil that causes destruction and divisiveness — and that is equally part of human nature — is also necessary. The bodhisattva's practice is an unshrinking confrontation with what Buddhism calls the

Title: Thoughts On Education For Global Citizenship
Subject: World Tribune 06/22/01 n.3351 p.4 WT010622p04 New York, New York 06/13/96
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: 06/13/96 April Citizenship Education Encouragement Global Globalism Guidance Ikeda June Messages President Proposals Speeches Thoughts through Tribune World York

fundamental darkness of life.

Goodness can be defined as that which moves us in the direction of harmonious coexistence, empathy and solidarity with others. The nature of evil, on the other hand, is to divide: people from people, humanity from the rest of nature. The pathology of divisiveness drives people to an unreasoning attachment to difference and blinds them to human commonalities. This is not limited to individuals but constitutes the deep psychology of collective egoism, which takes its most destructive form in virulent strains of ethnocentrism and nationalism.

The struggle to rise above such egoism and live in larger and more contributive realms of selfhood constitutes the core of the bodhisattva's practice. Education is, or should be, based on the same altruistic spirit as the bodhisattva.

The proud mission of those who have received an education must be to serve, in seen and unseen ways, the lives of those who have not had this opportunity. At times, education may become a matter of titles and degrees and the status and authority these confer. I am convinced, however, that education should be a vehicle to develop in one's character the noble spirit to embrace and augment the lives of others.

Education should provide in this way the momentum to win over one's own weaknesses, to thrive in the midst of society's sometimes stringent realities, and to generate new victories for the human future.

The work of fostering global citizens, laying the conceptual and ethical foundations of global citizenship, concerns us all. It is a vital project in which we are all participants and for which we all share responsibility. To be meaningful, education for global citizenship should be undertaken as an integral part of daily life in our local communities.

Like Dewey, Makiguchi focused on the local community as the place where global citizens are fostered. In his 1903 work, *The Geography of Human Life*, which is considered a pioneering work in social ecology, Makiguchi stressed the importance of the community as the site of learning.

Elsewhere Makiguchi wrote: "The community, in short, is the world in miniature. If we encourage children to observe directly the complex relations between people and the land, between nature and society, they will grasp the realities of their homes, their school, the town, village or city, and will be able to understand the wider world."

This is consonant with Dewey's observation that those who have not had the kinds of experience that deepen understanding of neighborhood and neighbors will be unable to maintain regard for people of distant lands.

Our daily lives are filled with opportunities to develop ourselves and those around us. Each of our interactions with others — dialogue, exchange and participation — is an invaluable chance to create value. We learn from people and it is for this reason that the humanity of the teacher represents the core of the educational experience.

Makiguchi argued that humanistic education, education that guides the process of character formation, is a transcendent skill that might best be termed an art. His initial experience as a teacher was in a remote, rural region of Japan, where he taught in the Japanese equivalent of a one-room schoolhouse. The children were poor; the manners they brought from their impoverished homes, rough. Makiguchi, however, was insistent: "They are all equally students. From the viewpoint of education, what difference could there be between them and other students? Even though they may be covered with dust or dirt, the brilliant light of life shines from their soiled clothes. Why does no one try to see this? The teacher is all that stands between them and the cruel discrimination of society."

Title: Thoughts On Education For Global Citizenship
Subject: World Tribune 06/22/01 n.3351 p.4 WT010622p04 New York, New York 06/13/96
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: 06/13/96 April Citizenship Education Encouragement Global Globalism Guidance Ikeda June Messages President Proposals Speeches Thoughts through Tribune World York

The teacher is the most important element of the educational environment. This creed of Makiguchi's is the unchanging spirit of Soka education.

Elsewhere, he writes: "Teachers should 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 to the throne of learning. They should not be masters who offer themselves as paragons but partners in the discovery of new models."

It is my abiding conviction that it is the teacher dedicated to serving students, and not the inanimate facility, that makes a school.

I recently heard an educator offer this view: Students' lives are not changed by lectures but by people. For this reason, interactions between students and teachers are of the greatest importance.

In my own case, most of my education was under the tutelage of my mentor in life, Josei Toda. For some ten years, every day before work, he taught me a curriculum of history, literature, philosophy, economics, science and organization theory. On Sundays, our one-on-one sessions started in the morning and continued all day. He was constantly questioning me — interrogating might be a better word — about my reading.

Most of all, however, I learned from his example. The burning commitment to peace that remained unshaken throughout his imprisonment was something he carried with him his entire life. It was from this, and from the profound compassion that characterized each of his interactions with people, that I most learned. Ninety-eight percent of what I am today, I learned from him.

The Soka, or value-creating, education system was founded out of a desire that future generations should have the opportunity to experience this same kind of humanistic education. It is my greatest hope that the graduates of the Soka schools will become global citizens who can author a new history for humankind.

Title: Thoughts On Education For Global Citizenship
Subject: World Tribune 06/22/01 n.3351 p.4 WT010622p04 New York, New York 06/13/96
Author: Daisaku Ikeda
Keywords: 06/13/96 April Citizenship Education Encouragement Global Globalism Guidance Ikeda June Messages President Proposals Speeches Thoughts through Tribune World York