

# Education for Human Revolution

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## Abstract:

This paper attempts an understanding of the idea of education as developed in the writings of the three presidents of Soka Gakkai International and further dwells upon its relation with the concept of human revolution. The philosophy of education as encountered in these thought leaders and spiritual agents of change has much to do with basic processes of creating value in life and inspiring a chain of such meaningful actions which result in what has been called- the human revolution.

**Keywords:** Idea of education, human revolution, philosophy of education.

*“Persons merely excelling in such areas [as book learning and technology] are nothing more than component parts of a colossal mechanism of the state and society. Truly desirable people of ability are creative people who untiringly pursue lofty ideals, who have rich individuality and who can make free and effective use of their knowledge and skills.”<sup>1</sup> Education must foster people who intuitively understand and know--in their minds, in their hearts, with their entire being--the irreplaceable value of human beings and the natural world. I believe such education embodies the timeless struggle of human civilization to create an unerring path to peace.”<sup>2</sup>*

—Daisaku Ikeda

## Education for Happiness:

Being an educator, often one is surmounted with questions like what is education and what is its purpose? Addressing the same concern Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, an educator from Japan and founder of Soka<sup>3</sup> education says that happiness is the purpose of education and it should encourage the learners

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1 Ikeda: 1968.

2 Ikeda: 2002, Pg.139.

3 ‘Soka’ is a Japanese word which means ‘value-creation’

“to realize their precious potential and to display their unique ability.”<sup>4</sup> Happiness here should not be mistaken as one’s enjoyment of material wealth, social position or power in society.

Dayle M. Bethel, who has done an extensive work on the life of Makiguchi, clearly points out that Makiguchi rejected any notion of happiness which can be relegated to a “...shallow, ego-centered hedonism, which use of the word happiness often conjures up.”<sup>5</sup> He was passionate about integrating “personal gain and social good.”<sup>6</sup>

For him, “happiness refers to a state of man’s life when s/he is engaged in the process of attaining and creative value”<sup>7</sup> and precisely such an education he called soka i.e. value-creating. He envisioned education to be a ‘community process of value creation’ and advocated community studies.<sup>8</sup>

Aligning his ideas with that of his mentors’ philosophy i.e. the first two Presidents of Soka Gakkai (Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, respectively), Daisaku Ikeda, the third president of Soka Gakkai advocates that the word ‘happiness’ here refers to the sense of fulfilment that comes from developing and deepening one’s humanity, rather than a more superficial state of simply being untroubled or having one’s desires realized. Ikeda’s educational philosophy therefore is essentially about how to empower people to lead genuinely happy and creative lives.

### **Towards a value-creating education:**

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, a revolutionary thinker and founder President of Soka Kyoiku Gakkai-Society for Value Creation Education propounded his philosophy of value creation for humanity. He believed that:

*“The purpose of Education should be derived from the purpose of life itself; and the purpose of life is deduced and recognized by the general public from their own lives as they live them, not by philosophers and theoreticians”<sup>9</sup>*

Education in his thought becomes instrumental in cultivating an understanding of happiness in true sense. Such an understanding of education helps in creating a democratic society of responsible citizens, advocated Makiguchi.

His system of humanistic education is aimed at value creation and “has the potential to provide a conceptual and practical framework for bringing into dialogue what, in today’s parlance, are the often opposing viewpoints of traditional progressive education’s penchant to simply convey knowledge.”<sup>10</sup>

His theory of value creating pedagogy clarifies his understanding of the term ‘soka’ which means value and is different from an object or its truth. Truth for him is an expression of an object which represents

4 As cited in Value Creation: 2016, Pg. 128.

5 Radhakrishnan: 2010, Pg. 25.

6 *Ibid.*

7 Bethel: 1994, Pg. 56.

8 Radhakrishnan: 2010, Pg.17.

9 Value Creation: 2016, Pg.129.

10 Radhakrishnan: 2010, Pg. 26.

its form as it is. However it does not carry any value. “Value is only created and added to the object by the subject,” and thus, “value is based on the subject and object relationship.”<sup>11</sup> The understanding of this relationship between the two gives ‘wisdom’ to look at things with a different perspective which in turn can help in creating value and it is education which can guide us in meeting this end. This wisdom is rooted in “human autonomy and agency, and begins from the Socratic injunction to self-knowledge”<sup>12</sup>

Extending along the same line of thought, Dayle M. Bethel, in his detailed work on the life of Makiguchi, says that “the aim of education is not mere transfer of knowledge: it is to guide the learning process, to enable the acquisition of (the methods) of research. It is not the piecemeal merchandizing of information; it is to enable the acquisition of the methods for learning on one’s own; it is the acquisition of keys to unlock the vault of knowledge.”<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, Paulo Freire in his work ‘Pedagogy of the oppressed’ argues that banking education is not only unproductive but it also reinforces rote memorization and suppresses the autonomy of students which makes their situation similar to that of the oppressed while the teacher is seen as an oppressor.

### **Role of Educators:**

A firm believer of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, Makiguchi, having encountered this philosophy in the year 1928, believed that the value creating education can only be made possible if the teachers become conscious of ‘the actualities of their day-to-day classroom experience.’ He further elucidates that for any educational theory to be effective, existential realities of classrooms, including that of the students, should be taken care of by the teachers in their educational praxis. Makiguchi appeals to educators in his extensive work ‘The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy’<sup>14</sup>:

*I wish to call out to those involved in the work of education: Correct your uncertain stance of advancing with your gaze fixed on the stars; attend, rather, to the ground on which you tread! If you reflect deeply on your daily experience, confirming the actual record of success and failure, carefully analyzing this process, you will be able to discover truly precious truths. Abandon an exclusive and meaningless reliance on the research of scholars in book-lined rooms. Bring together your own treasured experiences; synthesize and establish from these clear principles; test and verify these within your daily labors as a teacher, bequeathing to the next generation laws and principles of real worth. This is the great and weighty mission that has been given to the educational practitioners of the present day; your efforts will ensure the future growth and development of education. [1930]<sup>15</sup>*

11 Value Creation: 2016, Pg.134.

12 Ikeda: 2015, Pg.43.

13 As cited by Radhakrishnan: 2010, Pg.26.

14 <http://www.tmakiguchi.org/educator/educationalreformer/valuecreatingpedagogy.html>

15 *Ibid.*

While Makiguchi saw the role of the teacher as central to the process of teaching/ learning, he also underlines the crucial role which home and community play in nurturing a happy, wise, strong, contributive and responsible citizen in society. The main idea was to integrate education with a spirit of community engagement. Thus the aim of life, he asserted, should be governed by higher values for which a value-creating educational system must be developed which further helps in fostering human potential.

Dayle M. Bethel points out that the educational philosophy and pedagogy propounded by Makiguchi emphasizes upon “integrating the diverse philosophies in his cultural heritage and to relate them to practical educational needs”<sup>16</sup> which has been a remarkable contribution to the history and philosophy of education in Japan.

### **Humanistic Education for peace and human revolution:**

Makiguchi clearly warned that the purpose of education should not get translated into an agenda of the State. Talking in the same context, Josei Toda points out that “narrow nationalism and self centeredness have to give place to broader vision of humanity, recognizing the essential oneness of all humanity.”<sup>17</sup> Elucidating it further his disciple Ikeda asserts that:

*It is my belief that education, in the broadest sense of the word holds the key to meeting challenges of global responsibility and fostering the spirit of tolerance. Education does not mean coercing people to fit into rigid and unvaried mould; this is mere ideological introduction. Rather, it represents the most effective means of fostering the positive potential inherent in all people-self restraint, sympathy for others and the unique personality and character of each person.*<sup>18</sup>

Value creating education stresses upon the role of humanistic teachers who “are able to cultivate creativity in their students. This process of creativity and value creation emerges from the sound philosophy of life long education as the basis, the premise or the point to which one must always return; against which one can check one’s thoughts, attitudes and actions.”<sup>19</sup> Advocating the same belief, Makiguchi had high hopes from humanistic teachers who, he believed, could prove to be the agents of social change in world. As he believed that “the way only a human being can foster and raise another human being similarly a person of true humanity can raise a person of true humanity.”<sup>20</sup> Change through education seems a very slow process but that is the only means for transformation which enables continuous growth and development of teachers and educators.<sup>21</sup>

However, this does not necessarily only be the task of teachers/educators, as any individual who determines to dedicate his/her life to the cause of humanity, he further asserts, can raise capable people

16 Radhakrishnan: 2010. Pg.33.

17 *Ibid.*: 90.

18 *Ibid.*: 91.

19 Value Creation: 2016, Pg.131.

20 *Ibid.*, 133.

21 Value Creation: 2016, Pg.131.

for the welfare of the mankind.

Integral to the idea of ‘value’ as formulated by Makiguchi “was to develop the values of beauty, benefit and good in each individual through education so that they become happy and help others achieve the same goal. Such education is a joyful process in which school/college/University, home and community-contribute”<sup>22</sup> and thereby initiate a process of human revolution.

Going deep inside the precious guidance of his mentors (Tsuneshaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second presidents of Soka Gakkai) Daisaku Ikeda (third president of SGI) explains that “education must be the propelling force for an eternally unfolding humanitarian quest.”<sup>23</sup> He sees the relationship between education and peace as vital as education fosters love for humanity in minds of the youth and also inculcates zeal to dedicate oneself to society. So, Ikeda says that “the task of education must be fundamentally to ensure that knowledge serves to further the cause of human happiness and peace”<sup>24</sup> and brings about social change.

Daisaku Ikeda believes that “A great human revolution in a just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and, further, can even enable a change in the destiny of all humankind.”<sup>25</sup> The term “human revolution” was used by second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda to describe a fundamental process of inner transformation which is not divorced from our daily lives and “whereby we break through the shackles of our ‘lesser self’, bound by self-concern and the ego, growing in altruism toward a ‘greater self’ capable of caring and taking action for the sake of others—ultimately all humanity.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, Human Revolution means to rise above one’s lesser self and to have compassion for others. Ikeda says human revolution happens “when we transcend that normal pace of growth and undergo a rapid change for the better. The process of human revolution is one of steady, marked improvement, enabling us to keep growing and developing throughout our lives and for all eternity.”<sup>27</sup>

Integrating Makiguchi’s value creating education for change and Josei Toda’s Buddhist humanism, Ikeda advocates that education nurtures global citizenry that promotes ‘world peace or education for responsible living’<sup>28</sup> He envisions transformation of both individual and society through creative education as he states:

*“Undeniably, education is a vital issue for our times. With the sacred duty of training the people who must build the future it provides the driving power for relationships linking peoples, and encouraging ties of lasting peace and harmony”*<sup>29</sup>

Ikeda further shares three important avenues of basic learning/education as: home, school and community.

22 *Ibid*: Pg. 135.

23 Ikeda: 2012, Pg.111.

24 <http://www.ikedquotes.org/education/education445>

25 <http://www.sgi.org/about-us/president-ikedas-writings/human-revolution.html>

26 <http://www.sgi.org/about-us/buddhism-in-daily-life/human-revolution.html>

27 Ikeda:1998, Pg.299.

28 Radhakrishnan: 2010, Pg. 79.

29 As cited in Radhakrishnan: 2010, Pg.81.

Though these three are connected closely but the first and foremost remains the home and the parents who play a crucial role in shaping the personality of the child/individual.

N. Radhakrishnan opines that “Education is a process of both enlightenment and empowerment and unless religious insights and spirituality are woven into the matrix of what constitutes the core of this great liberating force, it will tend to be elitist, thereby being reduced to an imperfect instrument of Human Revolution.”<sup>30</sup> The model of soka education is an illustration of how “humanistic education could become a powerful instrument to mould young minds into global citizens who will be conscious of their being part of a larger Universe.”<sup>31</sup> Radhakrishnan sees a ‘remarkable similarity in the Gandhian vision of change through education’ and value-creating education which emphasizes upon human revolution for world peace.

Both Gandhi and Ikeda believe that education can play an important role in bringing about a new world order. The former considered education as an integral part of character development, formation of habits and source of nourishment for mind. He suggested creative ways of indulging the child in the learning process such as craft work, painting etc. and not merely mechanically. Similar perception can be found in Bertrand Russell’s idea of education which he believed should “foster four virtues such as *vitality, courage, sensitivity and intelligence*.”<sup>32</sup>

Dr. Ikeda opines that aim of education should be the development of individual as human being. One would like to conclude with the following words.

“Academic learning alone cannot develop the body and mind to the proper degree. To supplement it, we must devise ways of bringing students in contact with society and providing them with varied experiences as often as possible through extra-curricular activities and community life.”<sup>33</sup>

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30 Radhakrishnan: 2010, Pg. 88.

31 *Ibid.*

32 As cited in Radhakrishnan: 2010, Pg.95.

33 *Ibid.*

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