

## **Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Value Creation: Toward Humanistic Education By Dr. M. Satish Kumar, Cambridge, United Kingdom**

*(Dr. Kumar shares his experience practicing in the SGI on pp. 34–35.)*

*The following is based on a speech given at a workshop on “Value Education,” held in New Delhi, India, sponsored by the Ministry of Human Resources Development for fifty school principals on May 27–28, 1994.*

TSUNESABURO Makiguchi (1871–1944) was one of the leading educational reformers of prewar Japan, a brilliant teacher who introduced the concept of value-creating education. He was passionately dedicated to reforming the Japanese educational system, which emphasized rote learning over critical, independent thinking. His ideas are now coming into recognition the world over, and scholars are introducing them in their own respective areas.

Makiguchi was born into poverty on June 6, 1871, in the village of Arahama in northwestern Japan. By the age of 3, his father had abandoned the family; then his mother unsuccessfully attempted suicide by jumping into the Japan Sea, holding Makiguchi in her arms. When she later abandoned the boy, he was raised by an uncle.

Upon graduating from elementary school, Makiguchi helped in his uncle’s business until his teens. Thirsting for a higher education, at age 14 he traveled to Hokkaido, where he stayed with another uncle. There Makiguchi worked for the police department and studied to pass the qualifying examination for teachers. He entered normal school in 1891 and graduated in 1893. From 1913 onwards he worked as a principal and primary school teacher throughout the Tokyo area.

To fully appreciate Makiguchi’s educational theories, we need to understand Japan’s education system at the time. The goal sought by the nation’s political and bureaucratic masters was clear: public education must fulfill national interests. Makiguchi totally disagreed. He advocated that education does not exist for the government but for the people.

One of the basic themes in Makiguchi’s educational thought is the perception that human beings are creative by nature. According to him, it is the essence of humanness to be creative. Human beings will express their creativity in their behavior unless that creative potential is destroyed. IN 1930, he wrote: “We begin with recognition that humans cannot create matter. We can, however, create value.” Creating value is in fact our very humanity. When we praise people for their strength of character, we are really acknowledging their superior ability to create value. This we can practically demonstrate in our interactions with students.

The basic question then remains toward what ends and in the interest of what values human creativity is to be directed. Makiguchi contends that with proper education, human beings will choose to use their creative capabilities both to enhance their own lives to the fullest and to create maximum benefit for the community. This is what he means by value creation. In his thinking, a fully

alive, happy, fulfilled person is a person whose existence centers in creating value that enhances to the utmost both the personal life and the network of independent relationships that constitute the individual's communal life. Value-creating education is education that provides guidance toward that end.

Makiguchi described the special nature of value-creating education using the analogy of the indigo plant, which leaves a deep blue hue. That means anything dyed in indigo would become bluer than the plant itself. In the same manner, he believed a teacher must give his whole being to producing students who are greater and more excellent than himself.

I have adopted this as a motto in my life and profession. Education, I think, must never be coercive or forced. The heart of education lies in the process of teacher and pupil learning together, the teacher drawing forth the pupil's potential and raising the pupil to surpass the teacher in ability.

I would like to relate one experience I had in inculcating values of trust in students as master of arts and master of philosophy program coordinator in my department at Jawaharlal Nehru University. A student came to me asking permission to submit a forged form for a railway ticket to go home for vacation. He is a brilliant student, among the top five students of our center. He pleaded that he lost his father last year and that it was not possible for him to get any monetary assistance to come back to Delhi after vacations. My heart went out to this student, and at first I felt helpless. Then I thought about Tsune-saburo Makiguchi's relationship with students. I told him that adopting unfair means will not create any value. He may be poor monetarily now, but by cheating he would be even poorer in spirit. He cannot walk with his head held high even if he were to break all academic records.

I then shared my own struggles as a student with no money. He was totally taken aback with my experience and determined never again to think of unfair means. I encouraged him never to be defeated by his circumstances. He promised not to give in to such weakness in the future. It was a great sense of achievement that I could bring forth value in my environment. I offered him a summer job to earn money to pay for his fare.

At a time when the economy and society are undergoing rapid transformation, values tend to erode. We as teachers must inculcate values that not only we must cherish, but that others can appreciate and follow.

WHEN asked the purpose of his education theory, Mr. Makiguchi said—to create value. He believed that “school ought to remedy the moral ills of society.” His lifelong goal of unifying study with life was achieved in 1930, when *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy* was published. The four-volume work contains the essence of his forty-year career in the field and is intended as a guide for teachers in their attempt to nurture children in the proper attitude and skills to live life to the fullest. Central to this is the theory of value, found in the second volume. In it Makiguchi elucidates a system of values consisting of beauty, gain and goodness. This was an alternate to truth, goodness and beauty embraced in the West. Makiguchi replaced truth with gain. For him gain was a more concrete

attribute. Whether we gain or lose in terms of our own lives and the lives of those in our society is observable and is connected to the actions we take. Do we move toward harmony or discord? Do we move toward destruction or construction? Do we move to make ourselves complete human beings?

Makiguchi believed “that an education securing a child’s lifelong happiness is fundamentally significant in that it fosters the child’s intuition and allows for the development of the child’s potential to create value.” Thus, such a humanistic education would foster in students the ability to take action with a spirit of challenge. It would also generate self-discipline with a desire toward continual improvement. Based on enthusiasm, devotion and a wholehearted approach, such individuals can respond with flexibility in a variety of situations. Rather than being cold-hearted, they would profess faith in humanism with a heart that is readily moved by youthful spirit. In order to ensure the perpetuation of humanistic value-creating education, the need is for a regular reaffirmation of the principles of values.

Mr. Makiguchi’s spirit lives on, both in Japan and abroad. Daisaku Ikeda, the current president of the Soka Gakkai International, established a wide range of schools predicated on the value-creating education envisioned by the society’s first president.

I feel that the main features of humanistic education as embodied in the Soka educational institutions founded by Daisaku Ikeda may be summarized as:

- Trust: Emphasis being on the restoration of trust. As teachers can we generate trust with our students? Whether we can establish relationships of trust in the classroom would to a great extent depend on whether we ourselves believe in our students.

- Fusion of knowledge and wisdom: Any pursuit of knowledge for knowledge’s sake does not lead to the happiness of humankind. Progress can be defined only by social purpose and social ends based on human values. While knowledge generated by individuals for collective purposes may not lead to happiness, it leads to the creation of knowledgeable and immature, cold-hearted individuals. However, wisdom, whether collectively generated or individually identified, can create more value, which is long-lasting.

- *Ahimsa*, or nonviolence: Daisaku Ikeda, citing Gandhi, suggests that the spirit of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence, is the only way to restore a sense of totality to human existence. He quotes Acharya Vinobha Bhave, the renowned Gandhian, who said that now is the time for us to integrate correctly *vigyan* (scientific knowledge) with *atmavigyan* (self-reflection). This would usher in a scientific ethic of responsibility, where, according to Mr. Ikeda, the point of control is less over the individuals and more over scientific institutes, research foundations, governments and industry, which are the generators of mass knowledge.

- Global citizens: Human-istic education also desires to foster internationally minded individuals among children. This is possible by bringing them in contact with the spirit of leading literary figures of the world. The aim is to produce full-fledged global citizens who are sensitive to international issues on the environment, refugees, armaments and the quality of life. This is possible,

according to Mr. Ikeda, only if educators play close attention to the small endeavors of their students. This builds trust, so vital to education. □

**For further reading:**

☞ Dayle M. Bethel, *Makiguchi the Value Creator* (Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1973).

☞ *Education for Creative Living: Ideas and Proposals of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum, ed. Dayle M. Bethel (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1989).

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Title: Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Value Creation: Toward Humanistic Education  
Subject: Living Buddhism 11/98 v.2 n.11 p.30 LB9811p30 Cambridge, United Kingdom  
Author: M. Satish Kumar  
Keywords: Cambridge Creating Creation Education Educators Features Historians Humanistic Kingdom  
Makiguchi People Scholars Toward Tsunesaburo United Value