

Special Series:

Humane Education, A Bridge to Peace (1)

Daisaku Ikeda
Gu Mingyuan

Daisaku Ikeda (President of Soka Gakkai International) engages Gu Mingyuan (President of the Chinese Society of Education) in an exchange of letters addressing a wide range of issues concerning education, Sino-Japanese friendship and world peace. Both men are survivors of the Pacific War; and they open their discussion with memories of war transmuted into longings for peace. They have made education their life work, and so the influence of hometown, family and early education on one's character is a prominent thread in this opening installment of their ongoing dialogue.

Humane Education, a Bridge to Peace is the newest volume in Dr. Ikeda's Dialogue Among Civilizations series. In previous dialogues, he has exchanged ideas with Dr. Axinia Djourova (Bulgaria), Dr. Ji Xianlin and Professor Jiang Zhongxin (China), Dr. Ved P. Nanda (India), Dr. Felix Unger (Austria), and Nobel Peace Laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel (Argentina).

Education: a Driving Force for Peace and Harmony

Ikeda: I am delighted to have this opportunity to exchange letters with the distinguished leader of Chinese education, Professor Gu Mingyuan. This dialogue reminds me of a promise made to Zhou Enlai. On the cold, windy night of December 5, 1974, Premier Zhou met with me at Hospital 305 in Beijing to discuss a future friendly relationship between Japan and China as well as for the whole world. He expressed his hope for greater educational and student exchanges between China and Japan. During the 35 years that have passed since then, I have done my best to carry out his wishes. I feel sure that this dialogue between you and me would have made him very happy.

The great panorama of Chinese progress, pictured like a soaring dragon, amazed the world during the 2008 Beijing Olympics and Para-

lympics. They were festivals of peace that I followed keenly in the news and on television. I was one of those who perceived behind the events the triumphant way in which Chinese education evokes the strengths of youth.

In October 2006, Beijing Normal University, where you teach, paid me the great compliment of conferring on me an honorary professorship. I should like to take this opportunity of restating both my gratitude and my determination to devote the rest of my life to living up to the honor of being a member of your faculty.

I was overwhelmed with pride by your commemorating the fortieth anniversary of my proposal for normalization of Sino-Japanese relations as part of a symposium held at your university in the autumn of 2008. The keynote address you delivered at the time impressed me profoundly with its perception of ways to promote mutual understanding among peoples. In it, you reexamined the idea of the clash of civilizations as advanced in 1993 by the late Harvard professor Samuel Huntington (1924–2008). You insisted that Huntington’s theory can do nothing to explain accurately the causes of the modern crisis. However, you did agree with his view that “...the relations among civilizations have thus moved from a phase dominated by the unidirectional impact of one civilization on all others to one of intense, sustained, and multidirectional interactions among all civilizations.”¹

You insisted that interdependence among nations and peoples has become inescapable and that, for this reason, we must construct mutually triumphant relationships through peaceful dialogue and learn tolerance and understanding through repeated exchanges on many dimensions, including that of education. Once again, I share your convictions. That is why, as the founder of Soka University, I have pioneered exchanges among other universities and educational organizations all over the world. At present, Soka University maintains academic exchange agreements with 105 universities in 44 countries and regions. Yours is one of the universities with whom we have made such an agreement. My earnest wish is that we will increase the numbers of students who trust each other and who add luster to the golden bridge of friendship connecting our countries.

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.

After the confusion of the Cultural Revolution in China, you devoted your utmost efforts to the speedy modernization and development of

Chinese education. It is a great honor and pleasure to engage in this dialogue with you. I hope that, with our eyes always on the future of humanity, we can share a wide-ranging discussion of education in both our countries and of philosophy, culture, and world peace.

Dialogue with an Envoy of Peace

Gu: You are very well known in China, and I personally have the sincerest respect for you. I first heard of you and your work in the 1960s and 70s and knew of your meeting with Zhou Enlai. You played an important part in efforts to restore amicable relations between Japan and China. Premier Zhou prized your contributions and those of Soka Gakkai as a whole to the process of reconciliation. All of us at the time greatly admired your foresight and courage. Taking part in this dialogue with you does me, too, a great honor.

Over the past year, I have read your *The New Human Revolution*, (“Golden Bridge” and “Path of Friendship” chapters); *The Century of Education* (the Chinese title means children are the treasure of the future); *Dawn after Dark*, a dialogue with the world-renowned art historian René Huyghe (1906–97); *My Global Friends*; and other dialogues including those with the celebrated British historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889–1975) and the Chinese novelist Jin Yong (1927–). Your spirit as reflected in these texts moves me deeply. I am filled with veneration for the devoted work you have done all your life for world peace and Sino-Japanese friendship. Your early proclamation of the need to restore diplomatic relations between our countries and your promotion of private travel between our peoples prove more vividly than anything else your part in erecting a golden bridge of friendship between Japan and China. Even greater than my respect for your outstanding outlook is my veneration of your wisdom and courage. What is the source of your bravery? I suspect it arises from the hardships you have encountered and your own fearless spirit in the pursuit of truth and the good as taught by Buddhism.

The Influence of Hometown on Character Formation

Ikeda: You are too kind. You yourself are a great pioneering educator. I hope to learn much about your philosophy and practice from this dialogue. To begin with, I think we would do well to introduce ourselves to our readers and tell them something about our backgrounds.

I was born on January 2, 1928 in Ota Ward on Tokyo Bay. Our family

had been engaged in the edible-seaweed business since the Edo Period (1603–1867). I still remember playing on the shore amidst the rich marine smells and plunging my hands into the cold seawater early in the morning as I helped prepare seaweed. Home towns are more than memories; the places where we grow up help determine what we become.

The first president of Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was a master of creative geography. His *A Geography of Human Life*, published in 1903, deals with the relations between place and people. In it, he indicated the influence the home province has on character formation when he wrote, “My hometown gave me birth and reared me.”² He stressed the importance of taking the place where one is born and raised into consideration as a basis for observing and understanding the geography of the whole world. He commented that observations of home are fundamental and that becoming a citizen of a nation and of the world starts with being a citizen of one’s home district.³ In other words, one must begin with a just appreciation of the ways people in one’s own local community dress, eat, and live. The educational process he defines starts with recognition of one’s immediate society. “It [education] is not the piecemeal merchandizing of information; it is the provision of keys that will allow people to unlock the vault of knowledge on their own.”⁴ This emphasis is a recurrent theme throughout his educational method.

Makiguchi taught geography at the Tokyo Kōbun (弘文) Gakuin, a school where brilliant visiting students from China—including the novelist Lu Xun (1881–1936)—studied and developed close and beautiful ties. Some of them translated Makiguchi’s *A Geography of Human Life* into Chinese for publication in 1907. I was delighted to learn that a copy is carefully preserved today in the library of the Beijing Normal University.

Facing the Yangtze River on the north and Lake Tai on the south, your own home district Jiangyin, in Jiangsu Province, has a very long history as a major hub of development. Today, dazzling development continues as modern high-rise buildings go up. Though he never had a chance to visit China, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi wrote of his longing to see the great Yangtze, which he said surpassed in grandeur anything most of the citizens of a small island country like Japan could imagine.

The Tang-dynasty poet Bai Juyi (772–846) wrote directly and movingly of his impressions on a trip he made to Jiangnan, south of the Yangtze.

The scene at the Southern Country is beautiful!
The landscape there is familiar to me:

River-flowers are as red as fire when sun rises;
 The water of the River is a deep blue when spring comes;
 How can I stop thinking of my Southern Country?⁵

On my third visit to China in April 1975, I took a boat trip from Shanghai up the Huangpu River to the swollen waters of the Yangtze. During the trip, I discussed the future of China with Song Pinghua, then secretary-general of the China-Japan Friendship Association, and other representatives of the city of Shanghai. On my fourth trip in September 1978, my guides showed us the famous golden waters of Lake Tai from our boat. Reading aloud the poetry of Bai Juyi invariably recalls these splendid scenic places. The famous Ming-dynasty travel writer Xu Xiake (1587–1641), especially noted for *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*, hailed from the same part of China.

For the sake of mutual understanding, it seems suitable to begin our dialogue with questions about your recollections of your wonderful home region. I am interested to know your opinions as an educator and scholar about the influence a person's home district exerts on personality formation. What about your own home district inspires you with pride? What features mainly characterize its pedagogic history?

Maxims for Living

Gu: You and I are about the same age. I was born in October 1929 in Jiangsu Province, in the city of Jiangyin on the banks of the Yangtze. What is called China's number-one village, Huaxi, is located in Jiangyin. Owing to Huaxi's recent rapid economic development in recent 20 years, Jiangyin is now ranked among the 100 strongest counties and cities in China. But, at the time of my birth, it was still a small, lonely place. Although its city walls are said to have measured nine *li* (about 4.5 kilometers) and thirteen *bu* (about 18 meters), the area enclosed by those walls was only a little more than one square kilometer; and it took only ten minutes or so to walk from the east gate to the west gate. An electrical-appliance factory, a milling plant, and a textile factory located on the west side of the city before the War of Resistance against Japan were destroyed by Japanese military bombardment. From that time on, Jiangyin lacked electricity. By the time I left the city in 1948, the appliance factory still had not been restored. In those dark times, for a while we studied by kerosene lamps. Then, during World War II, when our supplies of imported kerosene ran out, we relied on shadowy firelight from lamps consisting of small dishes filled with soy

oil with several cotton wicks or rush stalks.

Not far from the city flows China's mother river, the Yangtze, which, rising on the Tibetan Plateau, flows thousands of miles to become the mighty stream emptying into the East China Sea. Over the centuries, many Chinese literary artists have penned poetry in praise of the great Yangtze. The Tang-dynasty poet Li Bai wrote:

From the middle of Heaven's Gate
breaks forth the river of Chu,
Emerald waters' eastward flow touches
north and then returns.
On either shore a mountain green,
emerging face to face,
Beside the sun a lonely sail: one single
sheet approaching.⁶

The Song-dynasty Su Shi (1037–1101) wrote:

The endless river eastward flows;
With its huge waves are gone all those
Gallant heroes of bygone years.⁷

By the time the Yangtze reaches my hometown, it has broadened. Its waves are as calm and gentle as a little girl. Its lower reaches form a delta of about 100 thousand square kilometers, supporting many people there.

Documents show that, with a history of more than 2,500 years, Jiangyin has existed from the times of the Spring and Autumn Annals and the Warring States (770–221 BCE). Formerly known as Jiyan, it became famous for resistance movements against the emerging Qing Dynasty toward the end of the Ming Dynasty. At one point, the Qing army besieged the city for one hundred days, during which the people of Jiangyin, keeping their vow never to capitulate, forged traits of indomitability. Later they built a gun emplacement and fortress in the hope of blocking access to the Yangtze. Though the city became famous for it, during the resistance struggle, the fortress proved useless.

As a cultural heartland, Jiangyin has produced many famous personages. The Ming-dynasty travel diarist Xu Xiake, whom you have already mentioned, was born there. Traveling on foot over mountains and rivers through many parts of China, he recorded his geographic and topographical observations in *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*.

Also from this region were the Liu brothers: Bannong (1891–1934), writer and leader of the anti-imperialist literary and cultural May Fourth Movement, and ethnic musician Tianhua (1895–1932). Neither of them completed middle school; but, working hard and studying on their own, they both became university professors famous for their contributions to literature and music.

The patriot and virtuous priest Juzan, too, comes from Jiangyin. After graduating from the Jiangyin Normal School, under the secular name of Pan Chutong, as a young man he studied at the Daxia University and later became a primary-school principal in his hometown. But, in 1929, he left secular life to enter the Lingyin Temple, where he took the tonsure under the head priest Quefei. In 1931, he changed his name to Juzan. His written work *Lingyin Xiaozhi* (the short history of Lingyin Temple) contains Quefei's poem entitled "Answering a letter from Juzan." In it Quefei expresses heartfelt poetic sentiments: "Having met in this Latter Age, we must think carefully about whatever we do. We must be wary of delusion, which may do harm like a mouse hiding in a shabby dwelling, and avoid such behavior as bending down to put on your slipped-off shoes in the garden patch since you may be suspected of stealing *pepos*. Like the good bird that chooses the right tree to perch in, we must behave in ways suited to our station and be always just and upright and must be clear about money matters. The people of old counted it a disgrace to pick up money."

As a priest, Juzan diligently studied the Buddhist teachings, reading 8,000 scriptures. Being fluent in several languages including German, Russian, and Japanese, he recited some passages from the works written in those languages and he authored study notes amounting to millions of characters. In addition to his ardor for the Buddhist movement, remembering the need to save his homeland, he took an active part in resisting the Japanese. After the founding of the new China, together with such people as Zhao Puchu, he helped guide the Buddhist Association of China.

I grew up surrounded by the Jiangyin cultural atmosphere. It was enriched and expanded by such cultural figures as these. Our tradition has inspired the people of Jiangyin to stress education, to stimulate the cultivation of human culture, and to evolve a character of great fortitude. At the same time, the local people draw on many spiritual currents to become open and broadminded like the Yangtze River. The nature of my home district inspired me to create the following four maxims for living.

1. In our behavior we should be as persevering and indomitable as the pine tree.

2. We should study to be able to take root anywhere, like grass.
3. In our contacts with others we should be as accepting as the sea is of tributary rivers.
4. We should be as enriching as the light rain that soundlessly waters whatever it falls on.

Domestic Education in Creating a Foundation for Life

Ikeda: Your eloquent words help me understand the scenery and venerable history of Jiangyin, but most of all they reveal how the characteristics of your home region live vibrantly in you personally. Your four maxims provide subtle guidelines for life. Now, I should like to turn our attention from the broader community to the domestic setting.

My father, Nenokichi, ran a fairly large edible-seaweed enterprise on Tokyo Bay until changes in the sea floor caused by the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 disrupted production. Then he fell ill with rheumatism. People offered help, but my hardheaded father flatly refused them all. He told us not to accept any aid even if there were nothing to eat but salt. In addition to being stubborn, he was totally honest and always did what he thought was right, no matter what other people said. He was a good man who, in spite of poverty, did his very best to take care of other people. Relying on no one, he caused no one trouble. Because he was taciturn, it was hard to know what was on his mind. But now, thinking back, I bow my head in respect. He was a truly great father.

My much more lighthearted mother, on the other hand, used to joke that, if we were poor, we were champions at poverty. Her children's health and happiness came first and were the main objects of her warm care. Working hard preparing seaweed from early in the morning to late at night without resting, she also had the demanding task of looking after eight growing children. She did a splendid job of it all.

Though sometimes skipped her own meals, saying that she was too busy to eat, she made sure we got the nourishing food we needed as cheaply as possible. She demonstrated in a prayerful, profoundly caring manner how to live wisely and correctly by encouraging us to eat as naturally as we could on the meager budget available to her—for instance vinegared seaweed and small fish, the tiny bones of which we were encouraged to eat for the calcium they provided. This was well before modern ideas on nutrition were developed.

As you have said, the home is a child's first school, and parents are a child's first teachers. In your published works, you have written that the process of human growth must entail education at three venues: home,

school, and community. You have also said that, though the three are connected and mutually influential, home education plays a very important role.

The influence of home training on a child's later life is extremely profound and long-lasting. When we engaged in dialogue at his London home, the great British historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889–1975) told me that the first seven years of life seem as long as all the rest. He added that during those years, children learn more things of great importance to them than they learn in all their remaining decades.⁸ I agree with him. Those years, during which they are in extensive contact with parents, lay the foundation—create the backbone—that determines whether they face unflinchingly or flee from the tempests of life.

Of course, home education is a mutual project. Parents are not always perfect from the outset. They must progress together with their children, patiently deepening their affection through their daily relationship. Many of the young mothers in our Soka Gakkai Women's Division struggle painfully with child-rearing. To provide encouragement, I always advise them to regard their relation with their children as one, not between parent and child, but between individual human beings.

Home should provide children with a place of security and trust. Unfortunately, such is not always the case. In Japan, for instance, the protracted influence of some domestic environments undeniably contributes to the lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem thought to contribute to juvenile delinquency. An American educator and close friend of Martin Luther King, Jr., Vincent Harding says that many children who resort to violence feel that no one pays any attention to or cares for them. According to him, this is one of the reasons why it is important to create caring attitudes at both home and community levels. Parental contacts and affection relate directly to child personality formation. Children observe what parents do. Seeing them serving the community and doing their sincerest best on the job first interests children in a natural way, then instructs them on how to live.

As president of Soka Gakkai, I was too busy to devote ample time to child-rearing. Still, with my wife's cooperation, I did what I could to stay in contact through letters, phone calls, and souvenirs of my trips. From my own experience, I learned that the length of time spent together is not the only factor in demonstrating affection. The important thing is for a parent to keep his child or children's welfare always deep in mind. Profound parental affection takes deep root in a child's mind.

Parents must always respect their children's individual personalities and help them grow freely, with a heightened sense of self-respect. Forc-

ing their own ideas on them diminishes children and inhibits their expressing their inherent personalities and potential. This can intensify a child's sense of being mistrusted and unloved.

You have said that home training is the foundation of all education. Please elaborate on its importance, including your own practical applications and memories of your parents.

What I Leaned from Mother

Gu: I come from an ordinary family. My grandfather worked in a tea store, and my father was a middle-school teacher. For many years, he taught in outlying provinces and towns, while my mother, according to old custom, helped my grandmother in the home. My parents were separated for many years. When I was eight years old, my father married another woman from the provinces and my mother and I lived together, supporting each other. It was hard for her to bring me up while dealing with poverty and getting over her own emotional wounds, but she put her whole heart into educating me. Named Zhou Shuzhen, she was a member of the large Jiangyin Zhou family. After the liberation of women in the early period of the Republic of China, she studied for several years at a primary school and learned to read books and newspapers. With my father gone, she was the mainstay of the household and served Grandmother faithfully for as long Grandmother lived. Even though abandoned by his son, for three years during the war of resistance against the Japanese, she further demonstrated her thorough sense of filial duty by caring for my then paralyzed and bedridden grandfather. All the real estate the family owned consisted of about 20 ares of poor land, which my cousin on my father's side cultivated. We lived on the little Grandfather had saved up before the war and on help from friends. Still, wanting me to grow up to be a capable person, they managed to send me to school. Mother always urged me to study hard so that in the future I could do even better than my father. Though he was a middle-school teacher, she thought highly of him.

We lived in a rented house in Jiangyin, with prosperous neighbors all around us. Though people often ridiculed us, Mother was never servile but did her best in so many ways that she won the neighbors' good opinion and respect. From my childhood, she taught me to be neither arrogant nor fawning, never to be servile to the rich, to be sympathetic toward the poor, to do for myself whatever I could do, and never to take aid from others lightly. This kind of training instilled in me so strong a spirit of self-reliance and independence that I have never bowed down to

authority or asked others to help me do anything that I could do myself. Mother taught me to live simply and frugally, prizing every grain of rice or millet and retrieving any food that happened to drop to the floor. She always thought caringly about others, especially the poor. She instilled sympathy for the impoverished in natural ways. For example, she taught me never to drop broken glass on the road because it might cut the bare-foot poor. I remember the many, many times she expressed her hope that I would grow up honest and forthright. Her own actions impressed me deeply with the need to be tolerant, cause no trouble, and care for others. She was on the best of terms with my grandmother and with her son's wife and was friendly with the neighbors. She died of acute cardiac illness at the age of 81. Until the very end, she caused no one trouble. I was deeply grieved that, at the last, I was unable adequately to repay the woman who gave her whole life to bringing me up. She never raised a hand to me, but she wept with sadness when I was disobedient. Seeing her tears was so crushingly hard for me that I would immediately mend my ways and apply myself diligently to my studies.

In 1949, I was accepted into the Beijing Normal University. Jiangnan people regarded Beijing as very far away and cruelly cold. As a child, I heard tales of how in winter peoples' ears and noses froze there. Mother, who had no one else but me, was secretly reluctant to let her only child go so far away. But, knowing it was for the sake of my future, she resolutely gave in.

Still later, I traveled even farther away to study in Moscow. I lacked the money to go home from Beijing before setting out for the Soviet Union, so I did not see my mother for seven years. Living on loans, she must have thought of me day and night the whole while. In 1956, after my studies were over, I went back to China. I wanted mother to come to live with me in Beijing, but she flatly refused to leave until she had repaid all her debts. It was not until 1959 that she and I were finally able to live together again. Even in Beijing, she did not take things easy but assumed the burden of caring for her grandchildren. She was a great mother who not only bore but also educated me. I shall remember her always.

My own childhood experiences make me keenly aware of the importance of domestic education. Parents are our first teachers. They make the earliest, deepest, and most enduring impressions on us. My personality and habits were all formed in childhood. Later, when I started pedagogic research, my own experiences made me realize the importance of home training.

From the day of their birth, children begin learning speech, awareness

of the outside world, and daily-life habits from their parents. If home training from infancy is good, children can expand their abilities smoothly in later schooling. If it is not good, however, they pick up wrong notions and habits that must be corrected at school. This process is much harder and requires more effort and patience than the comparatively easy task of teaching during infancy. This is why I am in agreement with Dr. Toynbee's statement on the importance of the first seven years of life.

In recent years, guardians have tried to put the entire responsibility for education on schools. This tendency to blame teachers for children's disobedience and indifference to study is worrying. Some guardians make the mistake of thinking that home training is necessary only in the preschool period and that, once children have started school, teaching should be left entirely up to teachers. Because children spend far more time at home and in the community than they do at school, this is untrue. Domestic training must continue until children reach adulthood and leave home. Because of the influence domestic education gradually comes to have, parents and guardians must set their children good examples in everything they say and do.

In Chinese schools today, we often hear that teaching children without siblings or children from single-parent homes is difficult. If it is difficult, it is less because there is only one child or one parent than because of the great influence of parental teaching attitudes. Parents determine how children behave. For example, parents who are dotingly affectionate or limitlessly indulgent make their children self-centered and willful. Often, violent parents have violent children.

I myself was an only child. Father left us when I was eight, and Mother trained and educated me on her own. She did not teach me reading and writing or how to study. Her words and actions set the example that bred in me a sense of justice and responsibility and made me comparatively studious. I do not, therefore, think that only children or children in single-parent homes are hard to teach. The key is the ideas and methods used to teach them.

Ordinary People Always Suffer Most

Ikeda: The extent to which your mother worried and suffered in bringing you up and the degree to which you loved and were proud of her moves me to the point of tears. By filling a post of central importance in the world of Chinese education, you demonstrate supreme filial piety to the mother who raised you. I feel certain she rejoices at it.

Learning of your mother's behavior awakens fresh memories of my own mother. She died on September 6, 1976. To my regret, at the time I was too busy with events and affairs of Soka University to visit her as often as I should have liked in her last days. Fortunately, I understand that, just before passing away, she smiled and said she had enjoyed her life. The preceding spring, I had carried her on my back up a road to see the cherry trees in bloom on the lower slopes of Mount Fuji. At least I had been able to perform this filial act. Two months before her death, thinking of her in her hospital bed, I wrote the following poem, based on one I had published earlier.

Oh, Mother.
 How miraculous and abundant
 Is your strength.
 If the world
 Lacked your presence
 We would lose our way
 And wander the earth forever.

Oh, Mother, my dear mother,
 You have endured winter storms
 And have held up your sorrow through frequent prayer.
 I pray that until your desires
 Take flight to dance among the clouds
 You will remain strong and healthy,
 Dear Mother.

Dear Mother,
 With mind and heart
 You express your desire for spring
 On the face of the earth.
 Please play for us a melody of peace
 And rejoice as mother of the Human Century.⁹

To my honor, many people love this poem, which has been set to music by two young women. Mothers are the sun, sea, and earth. Everyone everywhere is profoundly obliged to his or her mother. Mencius's mother changed residence three times to make sure that her son always had the best possible study environment. We in Japan have learnt much from this venerable Chinese image of a wise mother of noble convictions. Remembering our obligations to our mothers is the way to live truly tri-

umphant lives. I always insist that young people understand that filial piety is the root of all education. What you have written about your mother reinforces my belief that this is indeed true.

I was born the fifth child in a family of eight children—seven boys and one girl. I have especially vivid memories of my oldest brother Ki'ichi, who went to war in China in 1937. Once on a trip home he raged against the behavior of Japanese soldiers there: “They’re horrible, violent, and arrogant. Aren’t the Chinese human beings, too? What we’re doing is absolutely wrong!” I remember it as if it were yesterday. Some words and events never fade from our memories but remain always to delineate the path we will follow. Later Ki'ichi was killed in Burma (Myanmar).

I have many overpowering recollections of the war years. Of course, there is my beloved brother’s death in battle. Time and again houses we lived in were burned down in air raids that turned the whole sky red. Ill with tuberculosis, I coughed blood throughout the military training we were compelled to undergo. I concentrate all these innumerable recollections in the opening passage of my novel *The Human Revolution*: “Nothing is more barbarous than war. Nothing is more cruel.”¹⁰ These sentiments express my vow to devote my life to pacifist work. We must not allow history to repeat itself by creating a future of division and hatred in which, as is always the case in war, ordinary people, women, mothers, and children suffer worst.

Today, twenty years after the conclusion of the Cold War, the world faces a situation complicated by problems involving terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and regional conflicts. Upon request, I joined many other thinking people from all over the world to contribute to a collection of essays published in the United States as *From the Ashes—A Spiritual Response to the Attack on America*. In it, I expressed my thoughts as a Buddhist on the occurrences of September 11, 2001. My article, entitled “The Evil Over which We Must Triumph”, condemns all terrorist attacks—even those motivated by high-sounding causes and ideologies—as absolute evil. I argued that the way to counter the long, historical cycle of hatred and vengeance is to evoke the compassionate and constructive energy inherent in human life and use it to counter the energy of enmity and destruction.

Buddhism believes in the Buddha nature—that is, the good—in all people and urges us to persevere in intercultural dialogues in all fields. It affirms the belief that, by expanding such dialogues, in time, we will be able to convert a century of war and violence into a century of peace and nonviolence. This explains why I have engaged in a widening circle of

dialogue with leaders and intellectuals from all over the world and have repeatedly cultivated friendships with ordinary people and promoted frequent cultural exchanges. Believing firmly in the good inherent in all life, I devote myself wholly to the kind of education that enables human beings to live in accordance with their best potentials. The surest way to convert hatred into understanding, schism into union, and war into peace is to overcome destructiveness and aggression by means of education illuminating the good. Since we are approximately the same age, I imagine that you and I share many wartime experiences. We shall discuss them in greater detail later under the theme of war and peace.

Treacherous Japanese troops invaded and occupied your hometown Jiangyin, forcing you to move from village to village and change schools six times to escape their attacks. Though some of them may be unhappy and painful to remember, for the sake of future generations, please share your strongest memories of your youth under wartime conditions.

Youthful Memories of War and the Longing for Peace

Gu: My youth was spent amidst hardships and the gunfire of war. I had just finished the second year of primary school in 1937, when the so-called Marco Polo Bridge Incident—also known as the July 7 Incident or the Battle of the Lugou Bridge—took place, starting the War of Resistance against Japan, or the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45). Japanese aircraft bombed Jiangyin. Before the war, some of our distant relatives—local dealers in lime—had built an air-raid shelter. But it did not save them from being killed in the attacks. One of their sons survived only because at the time of the attack he left the shelter to go to relieve himself on the bank of a nearby river. At the sound of gunshots, people scattered. The rich evacuated to Shanghai. Some went to Subei (northern part of Jiangsu province) or to Taizhou (middle part of Jiangsu province). We went to the country. For a year, sleeping in several villages—Guanzhuang, Beiguo, Zhouzhuang, Huashu—at night, we hid in the mountains during the day. After a year had passed and the situation had settled down a little, we moved to a place called Jintongqiao, not far from the city. But Japanese troops constantly made inspection trips there, too, to purge us. So whenever we heard they were on the way, we would flee to another village. For more than a year, this unsettled life of fleeing and hiding made school work impossible. During this time, I only managed a few months in a kind of private school a doctor ran for a few students in addition to his work caring for patients. There were four

or five of us, some younger and some older than I. The oldest was in his teens. Age differences meant that we were all studying differing things. The youngest worked on the Three-character Classic (*San Zi Jing*), and the oldest on Mencius (*Mengzi*). I was learning The Great Learning (*Daxue*).

Day in and day out, we memorized the texts without explanation of any kind. After several months' study I could recite only, "The leader radiates the sunlike brilliance of virtue inherent in humanity, guides the people to progress, and leads the self and the other to the supreme realm of selfless, noble virtue." But I had no idea what the words meant.

Later I entered the town primary school, several kilometers away. I walked to school every day. At the city gate stood Japanese guards, to whom all Chinese had to bow or risk being struck with a rifle butt.

As you say, I wandered from place to place during the War of Resistance against the Japanese. I changed schools six times, returning to Jiangyin when I was in the sixth grade to enter an experimental school. Just across the wall around our sports field was a military-police post. We could hear the screams of innocent civilians being tortured there.

At night, just at bedtime, the military police often forced themselves into houses on door-to-door census checks. Anyone who heard a dog barking in the distance or a heavy tramping footfall hurried to blow out the lamp and talked only in low voices with bated breath.

For eight years, we experienced extreme material and psychological hardship. Sometimes, even now, I see Japanese soldiers in nightmares. The afflictions of those times left overpowering impressions.

I have never told these things to any of my Japanese friends and probably never would have if you had not asked about my background. The knowledge that the ordinary people of both countries suffered and that many Japanese families, too, knew the pain of breakup, hardship, and the loss of loved ones—like your brother—in war explains my reticence. In 1980, when I visited Japan for the first time, many amiable scholars apologized to me for the Japanese invasion of China and the suffering it brought down on the Chinese people. I replied to them, "There is no need for *you* to apologize. Many of you, too, suffered just as we did. The ones who should apologize are the Japanese government, certain politicians, and the invaders."

Indeed, the Chinese people are very tolerant. We can achieve the goal of peace if we have an accurate view of reality, heed history, and vow never to allow the tragedies of history to repeat themselves. I feel sure you agree.

My childhood experiences of the horrors of war make me prize peace

all the more. Like you, I found the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, shocking and am deeply concerned about ethnic conflicts and the war in the Middle East. Why human beings should slaughter each other is incomprehensible. We must strive hard for the sake of world peace. No more than a narrow strip of water separates China and Japan. Historically there have been many amicable exchanges between our countries. The Japanese invasion of China accounts for only a brief period in that long history. We must prize our good relations, forget the time of unpleasantness, and transmit amity between our nations from generation to generation. Enabling young people to do this necessitates earnest education that looks history directly in the face. Education trains personnel to bear responsibility for the society of the future. Young people must understand the significance of peace and be aware of the importance of friendship between our two peoples. Otherwise, maintaining amity perpetually will be impossible.

Dialogue and Exchange

Ikeda: I am grateful to you for this important first testimonial. We Japanese must never forget either the harm our nation has done to China or the great magnanimity of the Chinese people—including yourself. Remembering these things is necessary to friendship between our countries.

All nations hate war and long for peace. The royal road to creating a war-free world consists in creating strong, deep mental bonds among the members of the ordinary populace. That is why I am wholeheartedly determined to persevere in ceaseless, ever-expanding dialogue and exchange.

Notes

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 53.

² Translated from Japanese. Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Zenshu* (Collected Works of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi) (Tokyo: Daisanbunmei-sha, 1983), vol. 1, p. 15.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *Education for Creative Living: Ideas and Proposals of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi*, trans. by Alfred Birnbaum, ed. By Dayle M. Bethel (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989), p.168.

⁵ Shih-chuan Chen, *The Chinese Tz'u Poetry* (Chinese lyrics of the eighth to twelfth centuries). (University of Washington, 1966), p. 24.

⁶ Li Bai “Looking Toward Heaven’s Gate” trans. Paula Varsano.

⁷ Su Shi “Battle of the Red Cliff” trans. Lin Shan.

⁸ Linus Pauling and Daisaku Ikeda, *A Lifelong Quest for Peace—A Dialogue*, trans. and ed. Richard L. Gage (Boston: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1992), p. 3.

⁹ Translated from Japanese by Diana Bethel. The poem, *Haha* (Mother), is contained in the book, *Haha no Kyoku* (Mother’s Songs) by Daisaku Ikeda (Tokyo: Seikyo Press, 1998), pp. 27–37.

¹⁰ Daisaku Ikeda, *The Human Revolution: Book One volumes 1–6* (Santa Monica, California: World Tribune Press, 2004), p. 3.

Daisaku Ikeda

Recipient of over 250 honorary doctorates and professorships from the world's academic institutions, Dr. Ikeda was born in Tokyo in 1928. He has founded a range of educational institutions from kindergartens to universities with post graduate facilities located around the world, starting with the establishment of Soka University in Tokyo, which opened to undergraduate students in 1971. Other cultural institutions founded by Dr. Ikeda include the Min-On Concert Association and the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum. Academic and peace research institutions founded by Dr. Ikeda are the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research (Tokyo/Honolulu), the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century (renamed the Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue in 2009), and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy (Tokyo). Dr. Ikeda is the author of books on Buddhist philosophy, stories for children and a novelized history of Soka Gakkai (*The Human Revolution, The New Human Revolution*), and is co-author of a series of dialogues that began in 1972 and includes *Choose Life*, his discussion with the historian Arnold J. Toynbee. His interest in China dates from 1968, when he publicly called for restoration of Sino-Japanese relations. Since normalization of bilateral ties in 1972, he has visited the People's Republic of China ten times, including a meeting with the late Premier Zhou Enlai.

Gu Mingyuan

Now president of the Chinese Society of Education and Honorary Dean of the College of Education Administration (Beijing Normal University), Gu Mingyuan was born in 1929 in Jiangyin, Jiangsu Province. He studied in Beijing and Moscow, served as a professor, directed the International and Comparative Education Research Institute, and became vice president of Beijing Normal University. He has played a major role in promoting education in China. Having served as vice president of the China Education Association for International Exchange and president of the Chinese Comparative Education Society as well as vice president of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies, he is an honored figure on the world educational stage as well. China awarded him the title National Distinguished Teacher in 1991, and Beijing named him a People's Teacher in 1999. Hong Kong recognized him with an honorary doctorate of education in 2001 from the Hong Kong Institute of Education, and Teachers College of Columbia University awarded him their Honorary Professor Medal in 2008. He has edited several encyclopedias and professional journals, including *Comparative Education Review*. Professor Gu is the author of *Education in China and Abroad: Perspectives from a Lifetime in Comparative Education* (translated and published in English) and other books in his field.