

Special Series:

Humane Education, A Bridge to Peace (2)

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*Reading as a Source of Hope and Courage*

**Ikeda:** In 1945, the war in which Japan caused your country untold misery and brought immense disruption on the Japanese people, ended. The situation prevailing in Japan then reminds me of a line from a poem entitled “Spring Hope” by the great poet Du Fu (710–70):

“In the defeated country, mountains and rivers survive,  
In the vernal city, trees and grass are deep.”

I was seventeen at the time. In spite of the daily turmoil of the period, reading as much as possible brought hope and courage to the highly sensitive years of the springtime of my life. Whenever I managed to save some money, I hurried to the used-book shops of the Tokyo Kanda district, where I purchased and then virtually devoured the things I wanted to read. In this way I could engage in a dialogue with the great people of history that proved a beacon in the darkness. Did you feel the same way in your youth?

I understand that you and your classmates got together to form a literary group that put out a journal called *Shuguang* (Dawn), in which you once wrote, “The people are in a pre-dawn world of darkness, but the dawning light is sure to come.” Although not great scholars like you, some of my close friends and I too formed a reading group to discuss books. I have fond memories of those times. I read and reread giants of world literature—Goethe, Schiller, Byron, and Rousseau (notably his *Émile ou de L'éducation*)—and in my diary described how they moved me.

Of course, I read great Chinese works as well, especially *The Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*)—the history itself and *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi Yanyi*), which is widely popular in Japan. With the cooperation of the Chinese Ministry of Cul-

ture and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage, our organization held an exhibition entitled the “Great Romance of the Three Kingdoms,” which attracted immense attention in many parts of the world and, with more than a million visitors, was the biggest China-related exhibit in history.

I was fond of reading the works of Lu Xun (1881–1936) too. In a diary entry written when I was 32 years old, three months before I became third president of Soka Gakkai, I wrote:

“February 4, 1960

“I open *The Collected Criticisms of Lu Xun*. ‘What is the path? It has been created by the trampling of many feet through pathless places. It has been pioneered in places where there are only thorns. The path has existed for ages and will no doubt exist forever into the future as well.’”

The quoted passage from the famous essay “The Way of Life” embodies my determination resolutely to pioneer a great new path to triumph and happiness for the ordinary people. In the still vivid words of the great author, these convictions have remained with me, completely unchanged, as I have advanced the cause of world peace. In later years, I have enjoyed good relations with the Lu Xun memorial in Shanghai and the Lu Xun Museum in Beijing. On two occasions, I have met Lu Xun’s son Zhou Haiying, who has visited the Soka schools, where he expressed his heartfelt hopes for the determining role young people have in the future. Since 2004, he began encouraging studiousness in young people by presenting representative graduating students with the annual Lu Xun Youth Literary Award.

I believe that, as a young teacher, you were fond of reading Russian authors like Gorki and Dostoevsky. I too read them avidly and remember being profoundly moved by their roots in the ordinary people and the depth to which they plumbed human nature. When I read his *The Lower Depths* immediately after World War II, Gorki’s praise for the proud-sounding word *humanity* (*chelovek*) seemed to course through my whole being like flashing lightning. I mentioned this in a lecture entitled “A New Road to East-West Cultural Exchanges,” which I delivered at Moscow State University in 1975. On that occasion, I pointed out the consistence between Russian literature’s illumination of the indomitable popular will and the ideas of the people’s movement.

Be that as it may, reading is one of life’s greatest treasures and an indispensable element in the cultivation of human beings true to the best of their humanity.

What of your youthful reading has remained with you throughout life? What is your estimation of the importance of reading? What do

you pay most attention to in your reading? Did you come by reading material easily when you were young? In what difficult situations did reading prove encouraging to you? What reminiscences do you have in connection with the works of Lu Xun?

### ***Influence of Youthful Reading***

**Gu:** I was an avid reader in my youth too. I read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* when I was in the fifth year of primary school. Even though there were many unfamiliar logograms in the text, I managed to finish it. Some of the things that made the strongest impression on me were the Oath in the Peach Garden pronounced by Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei, and Three Courteous Visits and the rescue of Liu Bei's son Liu Shan by Zhao Yun during the battle of Changban. Carried away by the narrative thread, I had no understanding of the book from the historical angle. Still I found the heroes wonderful and just. Indeed the courtesy and justice forming the core of Confucian philosophy permeate the whole book. *The Romance of the Tree Kingdoms* has exerted a tremendous influence on the thinking of Chinese people because it is composed completely on the basis of orthodox Confucian philosophy. Confucius himself is held up as a saint in China, and Guan Yu too is revered as a martial saint. The numerous shrines to him all over the country bear witness to the great influence he and his chivalry have had.

In middle school, I started reading modern works like Lu Xun's *A Madman's Diary* (*Kuangren Riji*), and *The True Story of Ah Q* (*A Q Zheng zhuan*); Ba Jin's trilogy *The Torrents* (*Jiliu*)—*The Family* (*Jia*), *Spring* (*Chun*), and *Autumn* (*Qiu*); and Lao She's *Rickshaw Boy* (*Luotuo Xiangzi*). When I was young, I loved reading progressive writers because unhappiness about the state of the nation and the masses of the people made me a progressive too.

After victory in the war against Japan, with the rise of a lively popular movement, we young people fell under its influence and took an active part in the movement. A number of my associates and I formed a discussion group. In the darkness of Guomindang (Kuomintang) control, hoping for the speediest possible arrival of light, we named our group the Dawn Literary Arts Society (*Shuguang Wenyishe*). The mural poster newspaper written on Dowling paper, to which we confined ourselves at first, was cleverly designed and featured plenty of text and illustrations. The year following its founding, we began putting out a mimeographed publication which later developed into a full-fledged, printed journal. The *Shuguang Wenyishe* aimed only to make literary works public and

had no particular political support. Naturally enough, however, awaiting a dawn for the people, we inclined toward popular progressive movements.

During winter and summer holidays, we formed reading groups. I recall how, in the summer of 1947, older students from universities in Shanghai and Nanjing joined the Summer Library we organized in Zhongshan Park. The college students contributed their own books to local citizens. It was there that I first read *How the Steel Was Tempered* (*Kak zakalyalas' stal'*) by the Soviet novelist Nikolai A. Ostrovsky (1904–36). I found the revolutionary passion described in the book very appealing, especially the sentiment expressed at the end:

“Man’s dearest possession is life. It is given to him but once, and he must live it so as to feel no torturing regrets for wasted years, never know the burning shame of a mean and petty past; so live that, dying he might say: all my life, all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world—the fight for the Liberation of Mankind.”<sup>1</sup>

I was influenced by and decided to emulate this kind of courage and adopted as my penname Ke Jin, a Chinese transliteration of the surname of the novel’s hero, Pavka (Pavel) Korchagin. This gives you a good idea of the strong influence the book had on me. “Liberation of Mankind” coincides with Sun Yat-sen’s idea of World Great Unity; that is, ensuring that all humanity has ample food, clothing, and a chance to live happy lives.

Accomplishing this today means first realizing global peace. Happy living is possible only in a peaceful society. That is why the constant pursuit of peace has set the direction of my whole life.

My own experience has taught me the importance of reading to human development. During the Great Cultural Revolution, unable to do anything else, I determined to read. But at the time books in general were considered venomous. Only those of Lu Xun were regarded as highly revolutionary. So I began reading his collected works. The more I read, the greater interest they aroused. I found them most deeply meaningful when I was experiencing crises.

The occupational sickness of teachers is to see issues from a pedagogic viewpoint. I discovered that Lu Xun’s books not only remonstrated against abuses of the time, but also demonstrated powerful interest in the educational problems of succeeding generations. This was only to be expected because, since young people are the forerunners of societies and the future of their peoples, everyone interested in society is interested in educational issues too. Such of Lu Xu’s works as “What Is Required To Be a Father Today?”, “How Shall We Teach

Our Children?”, and “Children’s Photographs” are devoted entirely to education. His educational philosophy is consistently progressive and includes some keen indications that inspired me to study it. As a relative (my wife Zhou Qu is Lu Xun’s niece), I felt responsible for organizing his pedagogical thoughts. At an earlier stage he had been regarded as a man of letters. During the Cultural Revolution, he was held up as a revolutionary. Actually, however, I consider him an educator. His first job was as a teacher at the Zhejiang Secondary Normal School. Later he held a post at the Ministry of Education and taught at many institutions, including Beijing University, Beijing Normal University, Beijing Women’s Teachers College, Xiamen University, and Sun Yat-sen University. Certainly 17 years of experience like this makes him undeniably an educator.

After the Cultural Revolution, my desire to write about his educational philosophy intensified. As luck would have it, I was able to do research together with Jin Qiang, of the Education Department of Hangzhou University, and Yu Fang, one of Lu Xun’s early students and at the time principal of the Hangzhou Xuejun High School. Each of us had his own field or responsibility. I collected evidence of Lu Xun’s teaching activities and put his educational ideas in order. The other two collected his former students’ reminiscences. With good timing, in 1981, the centennial year of Lu Xun’s birth, the People’s Education Press of Beijing published our work under the title *Lu Xun’s educational thought and its implementation (Lu Xun de Jiaoyu sixiang he Shijian)*.

Lu Xun is familiar to Japanese readers. In his youth he studied in Japan and produced a very moving essay entitled “Fujino Sensei,” about the Japanese lecturer Genkuro Fujino. The essay planted the seed of friendship between China and Japan, and it has grown into a great tree. I hope it will be imperishable.

### *Early Light Shines On in Later Life*

**Ikeda:** Your *Lu Xun’s Educational thought and its implementation*, in Japanese translation, impressed me deeply. On as many occasions as possible I have expressed my thoughts on Lu Xun’s writings and have repeatedly discussed them and his philosophy with young people, including the beloved students of Soka University, the Soka Women’s College, the Soka schools, and Soka University of America. One major undertaking in this connection was a special lecture course delivered in 2006 at Soka University. On that occasion, I profited greatly from your

research. As you keenly observed, Lu Xun's achievements as an educator are undying. Your book includes moving portraits of him traveling far to lecture at universities in spite of being seriously ill and responding to student needs with sincere assistance and encouragement. His personality always attracted gatherings of students. He believed in, loved, and encouraged his students. He was neither a stickler for formalities nor an authoritarian. Regardless of the danger of physical harm to himself it might entail, he was always eager to give young people something new, profound, and valuable. The future is theirs, and he was unfailingly willing to devote his all to them. That is what a real teacher must be like.

His mentor-disciple relation with Professor Fujino, to which you refer, is immortally luminous in connection with humane education. Fujino Genkuro, an anatomy teacher at the Sendai Medical Academy (now the Tohoku University School of Medicine), firmly but warmly guided Lu Xun and corrected his lecture notes. The young Lu Xun realized that his teacher was eager to help him succeed. When later Lu Xun interrupted his studies to return to China to aid his people, Professor Fujino gave him a photograph on the back of which were written the logograms read in Japanese *sekibetsu*, meaning parting regrets. As is well known, Lu Xun always displayed that photograph by his desk as a source of conscience and courage. At Soka University, we have many students from other countries, including China. I hope they will always remember mental contacts like the one revealed in the relationship between these two men.

Your book further relates how, in his lectures, Lu Xun strongly urged young people to be brave, progressive, and fearless. I am deeply moved by the courage and compassion with which he encouraged his students and inspired in them the desire to know right from wrong and to combat evil.

In his youth, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, first president of Soka Gakkai, taught geography to visiting Chinese students at the Kōbun Gakuin preparatory school, where Lu Xun—ten years Makiguchi's junior—studied. While he was there, some visiting students from Zhejiang Province published a journal called the *Zhejiang-chao*, one issue of which carried both writings by Lu Xun and Chinese translations of extracts from Makiguchi's *A Geography of Human Life*.

Mr. Makiguchi consistently argued that whoever lacks the courage to be the enemy of evil cannot be a friend to good and that the educator must always be able to tell good from evil and to be brave enough to act in accordance with that judgment.

For a period of nearly 20 years, beginning when he was in his 40s, he

served as principal of 6 primary schools in Tokyo. Wherever he went, his teaching always zealously centered on children's happiness. Adherence to his own principles and fearlessness of the authorities in an authoritarian epoch frequently made him disliked and resulted in demotion time and time again. During World War II, he resisted the militarists' attempts to employ ultra-nationalistic education to rally the country. For this, he was thrown into prison, where he died. His work became the ultimate source of the SGI movement for peace, culture, and education.

In all times, the educator must clearly distinguish between good and bad and have the courage to call evil by its right name. Surely teachers with this kind of noble personality can enable young people, on whom the future depends, to grow honest and mentally vigorous.

In addition to books, encounters with good teachers are an irreplaceable treasure for young people. I recall especially vividly Mr. Kōhei Hiyama, who was in charge of the fifth and sixth grades at the primary school I attended. On one occasion, displaying a map of the world, he asked us what places we would like to visit. When I chose the very middle of the Asian continent, he happily said, "Ikeda, You mean Dunhuang! There are wonderful treasures there!" I still remember this incident because it planted deep in my mind a longing for Dunhuang, venerable even in China's long history.

After the fourth century, for about a millennium, Dunhuang witnessed a great flowering of Buddhism, which reached China from India by way of the distant Silk Road. In the eighth century, at the terminus of that Road, Japan too experienced a great Buddhist flourishing in what is known as the Tempyo culture (729–49) in Nara.

Several Soka-school faculty members have included Dunhuang on their travels in China. Although I have not actually been there, I have published a collection of dialogues entitled *The Glory of Dunhuang* with Chang Shuhong, known as the guardian of the place. In addition, through associations with many other people, I have learned of its artistic wonders, which were the theme of an exhibition called "Treasures from Dunhuang, China," held by our Tokyo Fuji Art Museum in 1985.

I mention the origin of my interest in Dunhuang to illustrate how seeds sown in childhood, the dawn of life, germinate and become sources of definitive light in later years. Whereas a teacher's insincerity can breed defeatism and sadness in children's minds, a single sincere word or act can shed hope-giving light to stimulate the blooming of boundless potential.

You warn teachers against resting secure in positions of power and

authority and insist that they treat their charges affectionately while continually improving their own pedagogic abilities and promoting educational reform. How they believe in and deal with children's internal possibilities and creativity determines the vast differences that set teachers apart from each other. Children believe in themselves only when teachers treat them with love and trust. Each child has the innate ability to regard difficulties as growth opportunities from which to advance optimistically. But good teachers are essential to its evocation.

We must never depreciate or condescend to children because of their youth and immaturity. To despise them is to despise humanity itself. Each child must be respected as an individual personality. It is important for teachers to think in terms of growing and developing together with children. But children themselves must always play the leading part. Manifesting this attitude makes children aware of their own great strength and helps them develop in a lively way.

Education always depends, not on systems or teaching-material quality, but on person-to-person transmission. From the children's viewpoint, teachers constitute the most influential pedagogic environment. This is why I always insist that teacher development greatly influences students; consequently, educational reform begins with faculty reform.

You have written that, although times in China were dark when you were in middle and high school, you fortunately had several good teachers. You attribute your own development to them and wish to emulate them in educating succeeding generations. What teachers did you regard with most respect and affection? Who among them made the deepest impressions on you? What are your thoughts on student-teacher relations and the teacher's role?

### *Unforgettable Teachers*

**Gu:** In the turmoil of war, I changed primary school six times in six years. That is why, sadly, no primary-school teacher left much of an impression on me. The war was entering its final phase and things were fairly calm when I entered Nanjing Junior High School—during the Wang Zhaoming (1883–1944) government re-designated Jiangsu Provincial Number Nine Middle School. Although, by the time we got there, the buildings had already been destroyed by Japanese bombing raids, our teachers survived. Fortunately many of them were outstanding educators who greatly enriched my youth. One of the most impressive of them was our first-year mathematics teacher Ms. Zhang Chenshun, who diagrammatically explained the four rules of arithmetic to us. For

example, she drew diagrams on the blackboard illustrating problems like the timing at which two cars competing at different speeds would meet within in certain distance. I easily understood what she had to say. Another impressive teacher was our third-year plane-geometry teacher Hu Jinglian, who, though barely in his twenties, had contracted tuberculosis. During class, however, his spryness concealed all indication of ill health. The diagrams he drew to illustrate geometric problems were highly artistic in precision and beauty.

On examinations, in addition to the ordinary problems, Mr. Hu included especially difficult elective problems that had no effect on test scores. But students who answered them correctly got extra points. Students who handed in their papers first too got extra points. He used this system to encourage us. I loved mathematics class and so often answered the extra problems and handed in my paper first. So I always scored more than a hundred. Sadly, Mr. Hu died of tuberculosis the very year in which we won the war against Japan. This was the first we knew of his illness. In spite of rainy weather, all of us students attended his funeral to say goodbye.

During my six years at the Nanjing Junior High, I did not study all the time. I took part in all kinds of extracurricular activities and never knew the university-examination stress students experience today.

Studying mathematics was more than information accumulation. I thought of it as a kind of art. We competed with each other to see who could make the most beautiful solid-geometry drawings and whose study notes were in the best order.

In the second year of junior high, I came upon a copy of the Qing-dynasty manual of painting called *Jieziyuan Huazhuan* (The manual of the mustard seed garden), and we all started painting imitations of it. One of our classmates was fond of calligraphy. I remember how we all started studying that art too. In addition, we formed a soccer team and published a wall newspaper.

As I have already said, in high school we formed the Dawn Literary Arts Society (*Shuguang Wenyishe*) and put out a journal reflecting our interest in national affairs. In this way, participation in diverse activities helped us be well-rounded. Traditional at the Nanjing Junior High School, this approach coincides with the educational aims of today.

I wholeheartedly agree with you when you speak of childhood as the dawn of life, a time of newly sown seeds and light that determine the rest of life. Your words skillfully explain the vital role teachers play in juvenile development. As I myself am deeply aware, the education provided by my junior-high and high-school teachers was far from unrelat-

ed to my later decision to apply to Beijing Normal University and become a teacher myself. It must have arisen from a sense of love inspired by the care my teachers gave me while I was growing up. My firmly held pedagogic conviction is that without love there is no education. The affection teachers have for their pupils transcends parent-child blood relations to express love for ethnic group and the future of humanity. Fondness on the part of students represents undying awareness of the great favors their teachers bestow on them. An old Chinese saying reflects the idea that students must respect their teachers as they would their fathers: Think of the teacher-for-a-day as a father for life.

My own experiences as a child deeply impressed on me the importance of teachers. They must impart knowledge to students. But, more significant still, they must conduct the kind of education that helps students become fine human beings. Managing a school always entails three aspects: physical plant and facilities, curricula and teaching materials, and school administration and faculties. I always say that teachers are the most important of the three. In Confucius' day there were no schoolhouses or textbooks. He took his disciples with him from state to state. In his lifetime he trained three thousand students, 72 of whom became learned enough to be called sages. This was all possible solely because of his own knowledge and wisdom.

During the 1990s, I visited the National Southwestern Associated University (*Xinan Lianhe Daxue*). During the war with Japan, though no more than a group of rough, dilapidated, one-story buildings, this institution nonetheless graduated many outstanding people like the Nobel laureate physicist Chen-ning Franklin Yang (1922–). This was possible because of the high caliber of the university's faculty members.

Our Nanjing Junior High School too had shabby buildings and nothing worth calling real equipment. Still it has sent many talented people into the world. Of course, things are different today, when nothing but school buildings, equipment, curricula, and teaching materials receive emphasis. But teachers are the ones who must understand and use such things. They are a school's most important, irreplaceable assets.

From a somewhat different tack, what attitude did teachers take toward their pupils and students in militaristic Japan? Did your youth coincide with the militaristic period? How did you break with martial indoctrination and pursue a path of pacifist education? What kind of practice resulted in your enlightenment about education? I am sure that your experiences will have a very enlightening influence on everyone.

### *A Decade at the Toda University*

**Ikeda:** During the militarist period, imperialistic education attempted to encourage people to sacrifice themselves for the good of the state. The bellicose spirit pervading the country found expression in such slogans as “Advance, sphere of one hundred million flames!” The emperor and the state were placed at the heart of all value criteria. But, brought up in an ordinary family, I was not in sincere accord with the trend to glorify war. For one thing, as I have said, my revered and beloved oldest brother was enraged by Japanese atrocities in China. Although fortunate enough to be blessed with good teachers, I was not immune to the influence of militaristic education. Its most frightening aspect is its ability to color the blank canvas of young minds to conform to specific programs. Under the influence of the trends of the times, I once volunteered for the Youth Aviation Corps. This meant that, even standing at the threshold of full-fledged youth, I was willing to lose my life on the battlefield. Of course, deep in my heart I wanted the war to be over as soon as possible. Still, saying nothing to my parents, I submitted my application for basic training. When he found out what I had done—as he soon did—my father gave me the tongue lashing of a lifetime. Three of his sons were already in the military, and one more son one year older than I, was on the verge of shipping out. He absolutely refused to let me, the fifth son, join up. I submitted—reluctantly—to his will. Now I am more grateful to him than I can say. I still recall how an older friend who had joined up later told me candidly, “It’s not as good as they say it is. A guy no stronger than you are should never sign up!”

The despicable tendency of the times is summed up in the attitude “If you’re not a soldier, you’re not a human being.” Gradually I, too, I came to find the swaggering military infuriating. Our house burned down in an air raid. Then I saw my mother crushed and weeping at the news of my oldest brother’s death at the front. These experiences impressed on my deepest being the cruelty and horror of war and without doubt set me on the path of peace education.

With defeat, all old values were swept away. Though freed from the fear of wartime, people found themselves disoriented, not knowing where to turn or what to base their lives on. They were insecure about the future and overcome with spiritual craving. So was I.

In this state, by chance, I experienced a fateful encounter with Josei Toda, second president of Soka Gakkai. It occurred on August 14, when he was 47 and I was 19. He was attending a Soka Gakkai discussion meeting, or *zadankai*, in the Kamata district of Tokyo, which was still a

bombed-out ruin. A friend took me to the meeting, which was my first. Though we had never met before, Mr. Toda smiled in a friendly way and inquired about my age as candidly as if we were already old friends. Under the influence of his warm personality, I frankly asked him about some of the issues I had long struggled with, like the right way to live. He gave me sincere, powerful, and clear answers to each of my inquiries. His attitude was totally free of pretension or condescension. The unvarnished humaneness of the way he treated me revealed his truly rare personality. Famished for reliable guidance in the tumultuous changes of those postwar days, I felt as if I had been given a ray of light of the kind I would now call eternal and indestructible.

I later learned of his wartime imprisonment for resisting the military authorities and of the way he remained unwaveringly true to his convictions throughout. Until then, I had regarded religion as questionable. Learning how courageously he had struggled against militarism and endured imprisonment, however, stimulated me to revise my views. Becoming more and more certain that he was a trustworthy person, I decided to embark on the mentor-disciple path and the road of faith.

Mr. Toda had followed his own mentor Tsunesaburo Makiguchi to prison. On July 6, 1943, the two of them had been arrested on suspicion of lèse majesté and violating the Peace Preservation Law. At the time, Mr. Makiguchi was on a trip to Ito in Shizuoka Prefecture to propagate Buddhism. Mr. Toda was at his own home in Shirogane-dai, Tokyo. Though he was 72 years old, Mr. Makiguchi was forced to endure the harsh conditions of solitary confinement. Following a series of persecutions, nearly 20 other Soka Gakkai officers too were arrested. After harsh interrogations, many of them recanted and fell away from Mr. Makiguchi. Soka Gakkai was brought to the brink of destruction with only one disciple remaining true: Josei Toda.

Kept in a tiny, dim, solitary cell—about the size of three tatami mats but with one tatami mat and wooden flooring—Mr. Makiguchi remained true to his faith and paid reverence to the Buddhist scriptures embodied in *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*. As is partly shown in surviving documentation, in all interrogations, he boldly continued to assert his faith in peace and justice. At the advanced age of 73, he died in prison on November 18, 1944.

Released on July 3, 1945, Josei Toda was determined to carry out his mentor's behest by rebuilding Soka Gakkai from nothing, working alone in the charred ruins of war-ravaged Tokyo.

As Mr. Toda's disciple, thus the third in the series of mentor-disciple relations that started with Mr. Makiguchi, I am thoroughly convinced

that we must never forget the Japanese militarists' invasions, encroachments, and atrocities first in China—a nation to which we have an immense cultural-traditional indebtedness—and in other Asian Nations as well. Learning from this history, we must extend the path of amity for the sake of future peace.

A year and some months after my first meeting with him, I began working at Mr. Toda's publishing company as editor-in-chief of a juvenile magazine at first called *Boys Adventures* and later renamed *Boys Japan*. Having wanted to be a journalist from my childhood, I immersed myself completely in the work, which, to my delight, gave me chances to meet many famous writers. Finally, however, the economic instability of the times forced us to discontinue the magazine. In spite of Mr. Toda's efforts to find a way out of our straits, the company fell on very hard times.

In those days, I was enrolled in night school at the Taisei Gakuin (now the Tokyo Fuji University). But on New Years, 1950, as the economic situation worsened, Mr. Toda asked whether I would be willing to discontinue classes there. Resolved to follow the mentor-disciple path, I immediately agreed and began devoting myself totally and energetically, day in day out, to rebuilding the business. To help me continue my education, however, Mr. Toda began giving me individual instruction, at first every Sunday and later every morning before the work day started. In the whirlpool of a killing struggle with deteriorating business conditions, he lectured me on, the essence of Buddhism and on a full range of subjects including economics, law, chemistry, astronomy, history, Chinese literature, and government. In gratitude to him, I referred to this course in person-to-person pedagogy as the Toda University. Because of the importance he attributed to dialogue, Mr. Toda's teaching method relied on posing questions designed to enlighten me.

One day, during a lecture on Chinese literature, he said, "Daisaku, Confucius was one of the great teachers of humanity. Which of his disciples do you like best?" Without hesitating, I replied, "Yan Hui!"

Thirty years his junior, Yan Hui stood in an age relation to Confucius similar to the one between me and Mr. Toda. He came first into my mind primarily because, as the wisest of the disciples, undaunted by persecution, he was truest to the mentor-disciple relation. On one occasion, Yan Hui expressed his belief that the more one looks up to a mentor, the loftier the mentor becomes. In describing Confucius's teaching method, he said, "I am extended through literature, I am tempered through the rites." In other words, both learning and decorum were means of cultivation. By means of a similar method, Mr. Toda strove to cultivate person-

ality, wisdom, faith, and practicality.

With the far-reaching aim of training leaders responsible for the future of Japan and all Asia, he formed a group to study the famous novel *Shuihu Zhuan* (The Water Margin). Since the Japanese translation of the title is *Suiko-den* (Water Margin Story), the group was named the Suiko-kai (Water Margin Group). But the *Shuihu Zhuan* was not the only text we studied. I fondly remember how, at a time when books were hard to come by, we shared copies of many other works, like Hall Caine's *The Eternal City*, Hugo's *Ninety-Three* (*Quatrevingt-treize*), Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* (*Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*), Sabatini's *Scaramouche*, and *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. The Eighteen Histories in Brief edited by Zeng Xianzhi, which had long been a popular favorite in Japan, has the passage "the past is a mirror showing the causes of the rise and fall of nations, and the person is a mirror showing the justice or injustice of his deeds." Mr. Toda very often referred to this passage. With a total grasp of their personalities and thinking patterns, he brought to life in our times dramas of national flourishings and failures, the roles leaders played in them, and the true nature of leadership. He constantly stressed the importance of a historical philosophy by urging us always to be on the side of the ordinary people and to avoid the path of force. Such, he insisted, is the truly royal road.

Though strict, he had greater affection for youth than anyone I have ever known. Believing in us absolutely, he put the future entirely into our hands. He educated the whole personality in a rare, apparently effortless way. The things he taught me have accumulated in the depths of my life. Earlier you were kind enough to speak of my enlightenment concerning education. If I have the smallest part of what you describe it is all owing to the ten years' special instruction Mr. Toda gave me. I imagine that you too had memorable mentors. Please describe your meetings with them, their personalities, the training you received from them, and any fond memories you may have of them.

### *Teachers Who Set Life's Course*

**Gu:** I was not blessed with a single teacher who determined my whole life, as you were with Josei Toda. Still, as I said earlier, I did encounter many outstanding teachers like the ones I had in middle and high school. Actually, my mother was the first teacher to exert a great influence on my life. She taught me how to become a fine human being. After the Liberation, I had many school teachers. At Beijing Normal

University, I studied the history of social development under Hou Wailu, Kantian philosophy under Wang Dianji, pedagogic policies under Dong Weichuan, and secondary education under Lin Liru. All famous scholars in China, they not only imparted knowledge, but also helped us orient our lives.

In the days immediately after the Liberation, everyone burned with the passion to build a new China. Liberation meant freeing the laboring masses; building a new country meant enabling them to live happy lives. Our teachers taught us that education consists in serving the masses and training people to serve the laborers and build a new nation. This approach determined my course in life and prompted me to devote myself wholly to educational endeavors.

**Ikeda:** Soka Gakkai began, in 1930, as an association of educators called Soka Kyoiku Gakkai, or the Soka Educational Association.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, its first president, was an exceptional educator, a primary-school teacher and principal, and the author of *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*, his great life's work. His disciple Josei Toda too was an educator of rare talent. Having taught primary school, he later became head of the Jishū Gakkan private school, publisher of educational texts, and educator of many talented young people. His own book *Suirishiki Shido Sanjutsu (A Deductive Guide to Arithmetic)* became a best-seller for the times with more than a million copies sold. Concepts jointly developed by these two men are the basis on which the Soka Schools and Soka University were founded. In November, 1950, even though his business affairs were at a low ebb, Mr. Toda suggested that we form Soka University. He said that, if it proved impossible in his lifetime, he entrusted the task to me. I vowed to carry out his wishes. And with this in mind and intensifying my dedication to educational work, I have founded Soka University; Soka Women's College; Soka University of America; Soka primary, middle, and high schools in both eastern and western Japan; and kindergartens in several places in Japan and overseas. All of them carry out consistent courses of Soka education.

Soka University moves forward in its effort to train people who can make important contributions to the creation of a peaceful society. We are immensely proud that it was the first such institution to welcome visiting Chinese students after World War II.

As founder, I try to visit the university and our other schools as often as time permits and talk with and encourage students because I believe that person-to-person communications are the essence of education.

Numerous intellectuals have praised Soka University of America, which opened in 2001. As a liberal-arts college, it stresses humane education and, by limiting class sizes, encourages direct contacts between students and teachers. Significant numbers of its graduates are already astonishingly active in many parts of the world. Soka University of America shares your conviction that education is a process shared by teachers and students.

You have abundant experience in secondary education. In addition to being a university faculty member and administrator, you have been in charge of a middle school attached to Beijing Normal University. You have evolved many noteworthy ideas. For example, you have written that improving teacher quality is the key to improving educational quality and that the faculty is the soul of a school. No doubt, your pedagogic philosophy is based on practice and experience in the actual learning place. Please discuss your first school appointment after university graduation and the memorable contacts you have had with students. What are your pedagogic ideas and convictions? I feel sure that our young scholars will be interested to learn your experiences of success or failure with the half-work half-study system you experienced while teaching middle school.

### *My Life in Education*

**Gu:** After graduating from the Lenin Normal College in Moscow, in 1956, I returned to China to become an assistant in the School of Education at Beijing Normal University, where the dean put me in charge of the geography department. I often took students on tours and training visits to middle schools. But, our lecture material was always academic and theoretical and dealt only with concepts, rules, and theories. Although I taught it, I was not very interested in the work because it was unconnected with reality. In 1957, the School of Education sent me to a primary school in Beijing's Xicheng district, where, in addition to teaching, I was responsible for student classes. At last this inspired in me a sense of really teaching, as I came into close contact with students and got to understand how they thought. In 1958, I returned to Beijing to fill a position comparable to that of vice-principal at the middle school affiliated with Beijing Normal University. In connection with the Great Leap Forward program of rapid development then underway, the education division too was undergoing a great revolution. Small furnaces were built in school playgrounds, and high-school students and staff members took part in producing steel from scrap iron. Not surprisingly, our steel

turned out to be nothing but useless. However, this experience increased their knowledge of things like the nature of steel, its carbon content, and its place in industrialization. Part of the Great Leap Forward, educational reform promoted mental concentration, integrated the teaching system, and established connections between production and labor, thus making students too participants in productive work. In connection with my job of assisting the middle-school principal and developing new educational-reform plans, I came up with the following two ideas. The first was a proposal to integrate the existing system of three years middle and three years high school into a four-year middle school. The second was the half-work half-study reorganization of class work into four days' study and two days' work. Reflecting on it now, I see what a joke it was for me to presume to enact numerous plans like these. Fresh out of school, with no understanding and slight acquaintance with subject matter, I had never requested training from specialists and relied on nothing but pedagogical textbook knowledge. Obviously extreme left-leaning attempts of this kind could not succeed. Three very hard years began in 1959, as the whole nation enter a phase referred to as "regulation, stability, fulfillment, and improvement." Our reform attempts ceased, and we changed course to devote effort to improving educational quality.

In those days, on the basis of Soviet models, we laid heavy stress on combining education and labor. At our middle school, there were several lathes, a fraise, and a boor bank in the working place. Students worked one day a week. We teachers joined them, and I learned how to operate a lathe. During summer vacation, we went to rural areas to help with the mowing and then again with the harvest in the autumn. As the vice-director of the instruction center, I often took more than a thousand students from the whole school to work in agricultural villages in the Beijing vicinity. Students were divided up among villages. Every day, I bicycled from one place to another, making sure they were all right. Young and self-confident, and also somewhat influenced by a Soviet educational policy, I was convinced that students will naturally regard as sacrosanct whatever strict teachers say. I was stern and demanding and constantly scolded my students, who called me "devil instructor" behind my back. Reflecting on those times now, I see that much of what I did was incompatible with the rules of good pedagogy.

In addition to my work at the instruction center, I taught middle-school first-grade Russian. In spite of my limited teaching experience, as I prepared for class, I could tell that study-guide standards were very low. For one thing, vocabulary was too limited. As soon as students

learned something new they forgot what had gone before it. I had doubts about how real learning could be accomplished this way. So, without regard to the teaching outlines, I expanded vocabulary and increased both advancement and difficulty in ways that proved tolerably effective.

I did plenty of foolish things during my several years at the affiliated middle school, but I learned a lot as well. Direct experience of Chinese middle-school education tempered me considerably. From practical experience, I sought to formulate educational and pedagogical rules that, especially upon later consideration, enabled me to arrive at several principles that became the basis for my still later research into educational theory.

From observing many veteran teachers at work, I came to see that, though individuals have different methods and techniques, teaching (instruction) is an art. Among the mathematics teachers at our affiliated middle school in those days were Han Manlu, Shen Jieren, and Cao Zhenshan, famous throughout the city of Beijing. Their idiosyncrasies and styles gave rise to the use of such terms as *Han algebra*, the *Shen trigonometry*, and *Cao geometry*.

The greatest harvest of my work at that school was making a connection between the pedagogic theories I had learned and actual educational experience. This in turn deepened my understanding of educational concepts. In particular, I came to grasp the truth of the expression that there is no education without affection and no learning without arousing student interest. These convictions have remained with me all my life.

In the autumn of 1958, during the period of the Great Leap Forward, one student vividly demonstrated to me how essential affection is in teaching. All of our teachers and students strove as hard as possible to make the Great Leap successful by working day and night in the steel-production drive sweeping the country. Early one morning I happened upon a girl student sleeping in our conference room. The same thing occurred several times. At first, I thought nothing of it. No doubt, she had been busy making steel until too late. But, concerned when I learned that she failed to return home several days in a row, I asked why. She replied that she didn't want to go home. No matter how I tried to persuade her, she refused. After looking into the matter, I learned that, the daughter of an executive, she had been born during the hard times of the revolutionary struggle and, while still a newborn infant, had been left in the house of some ordinary citizens. Finally, after Liberation, she was able to go back to her real home. By then, however, a gap had opened between her own ways of thinking and feeling and those of her parents. What is more, her mother, a very strict woman, shared the traditional

attitude that males are superior and was therefore partial to the daughter's older brother. The girl student rejected the idea of returning to a family that treated her coldly. As I have said, my repeated attempts to persuade her failed. So I arranged for her to stay at a school dormitory.

I repeatedly made contact with her mother, trying to convince her that parents can demand anything of their child only after parents and their child deeply understand each other, and that what she needed is to demonstrate more affection for her daughter. My attempt failed because the mother and I had different ideas about teaching. The girl had been making bad grades, about which she was insecure. Her mother and father attributed her emotional state to over-permissiveness on the part of the school.

At this point, I recalled something I learned in the Soviet Union from the writer and educator Anton Semenovych Makarenko (1888–1939), who said it is permissible to make demands of students as long as we esteem them. Reasonable demands made of them express esteem and trust. Education reaches its goal when both parties understand and respect each other on the basis of mutual trust.

The cases of many students demonstrate how no learning takes place without interest in the subject matter. Some students enjoy mathematics; others prefer languages. They study and do well in the subjects they enjoy but neglect and do poorly on others that appeal to them less. Some students who favor certain subjects are indifferent and make no effort in other unfamiliar areas. Nonetheless, a skillful lecturer can stimulate interest. Sometimes a student's dislike of a course can be traced, not to the subject matter material, but to dissatisfaction with the teacher. As soon as another teacher appears, the student immediately becomes interested. It is probably an eternal truth that no learning occurs unless students are interested in what they study.

The science, art, and value of education are to be sought in how student interest is aroused. From this we can discern the importance of the teacher, who must excel at inspiring interest in study and influence students through his or her knowledge and wisdom and personality appeal.

### *From the Cultural Revolution to the Modernization of Education*

**Ikedda:** Each of your comments is of the greatest value. I am grateful for your candor and profoundly moved by the truth and sincerity of a great educator like you.

Now I should like to ask you more about your experiences in the Great Cultural Revolution. I understand that you were unreasonably crit-

icized as a capitalist authoritarian and that the severest criticism came from some of your most intimate friends acting out of fear of being criticized themselves. I deeply sympathize with the way this must have made you feel. Observation of many human circumstances has shown me that adversity brings out a person's true quality. At crucial times, it becomes apparent whether a person is pure gold or base metal with ornamental plating.

Beginning in 1971, you spent two years working hard in a farming village. The experience both strengthened you physically and increased and deepened your knowledge and understanding of village life. In short, it made you stronger in both body and mind.

Frail in my youth, I was so afflicted with tuberculosis that the doctors predicted I would not live long. But desperately hard work under my mentor Josei Toda enabled me to overcome my condition and proved to me how important good health is to triumph in life.

I have encountered precious testimonials about the period of the Great Cultural Revolution from many people in China. On four occasions, I have met the people's writer Ba Jin, whom you loved reading when you were young. I still remember how, at our third meeting, in May, 1984, he expressed his firm conviction that truth always wins out over evil and that this belief helped him survive the stormy period. He also said that, even in the midst of great distress, the one thing on his mind was fighting, fighting, and fighting to survive. Although he knew he must die some day, as a writer and a human being he wanted to leave truth for posterity. Deeply moved by his words, I saw that such an indomitable spirit provides the fundamental support to resist all suffering. You too employed adverse circumstances as a springboard to improvement. I am sure your way of life has encouraged untold numbers of young people.

From my youth, I have been very fond of the adage that encountering obstacles makes waves grow all the more stubborn. The cruel circumstances and hardships we face are excellent opportunities for substantial growth. People who adopt this attitude to life are truly brave and happy. Education provides the strength to live in this way. What kinds of thoughts occupied your mind during the Cultural Revolution?

### *In the Calamity of the Cultural Revolution*

**Gu:** Life is never all smooth sailing. Everyone inevitably encounters misfortunes, big or small. The disasters of my childhood were the Japanese military invasion and the destruction of our house. That of my maturity was the Great Cultural Revolution. My foreign friends are inca-

pable of understanding what it was like. The unprecedented tempest of the Cultural Revolution swept through China between June, 1966, and October, 1967. Young people today neither know nor can comprehend the cruel outcomes of this movement. The reasons on which he acted remain unclear, but I think Mao Zedong was mistaken in his judgment of the prevailing situation.

Relations between China and the Soviet Union were confrontational. Mao thought the Soviets were revisionists who had altered the nature of socialism and suspected that Khrushchev's criticisms of Stalin signified a move in capitalistic directions. He was therefore always on the lookout for would-be Khrushchevs among the people around him. The Cultural Revolution started as an attempt to mobilize the masses against so-called capitalist-roaders. Initially he believed the situation could be brought under control in three years, by which time the nation would revert to the true path. But after Lin Biao, Jiang Qing, and the so-called Gang of Four seized central authority and began overthrowing senior revolutionaries, chaos reigned. Aspects of the situation became uncontrollable. In October, 1976, with the downfall of the Gang of Four, the Great Cultural Revolution finally drew to a close. China embarked on a new path of wholesome development.

In 1962, I left the Beijing Normal University middle school to return to teaching at the university itself. In 1965, I became vice-dean of the Department of Education and vice-director of the Institute for the Study of Foreign Affairs. At the time, the department chairmanship was vacant. Operations centered on me. When the Cultural Revolution started, I became the object of criticism because of capitalist-roader tendencies in the department. At first, teachers and students put up poster newspapers (known as big-character posters) questioning reactionary practices in the city of Beijing. Leaders of the Beijing municipal communist party came in for criticism as reactionaries. The revolutionaries at the Institute for the Study of Foreign Affairs got hold of me too. As of 1965, leaders of the school Communist Party ordered me to edit and published *Educational Trends in Other Countries*, introducing experiences and tendencies in overseas educational reform and development. In a preface to the publication, I made it clear that to learn about others is to learn about oneself and provided reference for everyone's criticism. But the revolutionaries accused me of proselytizing capitalist revisionist education and insisted that I should be overthrown as a capitalist-roader advocating the pursuit of the authentic capitalist path. On June 11, 1966, revolutionaries in the Institute for the Study for Foreign Affairs dragged me to one of the so-called struggle sessions, demanding to know why

and to what purpose I used *Educational Trends in Other Countries* to teach capitalism and revisionism. This was the first time I was examined at a struggle session. Since the movement had barely gotten underway, it was relatively mild. I merely sat and endured criticism.

At the education-department criticism struggle on June 17, however, things were very different. I stood in front of everyone with my head down all the while, indicating admission of guilt, while jeers rained down on me. My wife Zhou Qu too was dragged on the platform and submitted to the same criticism. A girl who had been one of my closest students both in the university middle school and at the university questioned her. Still, given the times, I understood and had no wish to blame her. She was forced to pursue me harshly because all her classmates knew that she and I were very close. I realized that circumstances forced her to act as she did. To this day, I have never once condemned her. After the Cultural Revolution we remained on our old friendly footing. Now she spends most of her time with her daughter in America. But, in the fall of 2008, she returned to China and, together with some of her classmates, called on me.

Some other people, however, I can never forgive. To protect himself, one of the vice-directors of the Institute for the Study of Foreign Affairs conspired with the revolutionaries to distort my story. Another male teacher remained unmarried though he was already past 30. Worried about him, his associates tried to introduce him to a prospective wife. He unjustly exonerated himself by falsely accusing his associates for, as he said, trying to make him lapse into bourgeois attitudes. His reaction goes beyond mere severing of relations with others and questions the very nature of his personality. As the old Chinese saying has it, “The strong are revealed in times of adversity.” In other words, when times are hard, a human reveals what he is truly made of.

During the Great Cultural Revolution, many teachers killed themselves because they could not stand the persecution and humiliation. In the early phase, I was frightened and bewildered. I lost my appetite and could not sleep. I experienced oral pain. But my wife tried to console me by reminding me that things had been even worse during the Yan’an Rectification Movement of 1942 to 1944. Her words cheered me somewhat.

Later, as the numbers of people subjected to these criticism struggles grew and grew, I said to myself “How on earth can so many counter-revolutionaries exist?”, and I gradually came to be fearless.

I suppose it can be said that the suffering inflicted on me by the Cultural Revolution was not all that great. On August 18, 1968, the Red

Guard in our education department rounded up me, as a capitalist roader, and other reactionary scholarly authoritarians (all elderly intellectuals) and subjected us to a process of reform through labor by having us pull weeds on the campus every day. I was especially fortunate to be able to return to Beijing Normal University in 1962. If I had remained at the affiliated school, middle- and high-school students, ignorant of the world and prone to both literary and armed conflicts, would probably have inflicted painful corporal punishment on me.

In addition to the havoc of war, you have encountered other frustrations in your lifetime. What were they like and how did you overcome them?

### *Trials as Springboards to Progress*

**Ikeda:** I am once again grateful to you for your realistic descriptions of the fierceness of the tempest caused by the persecutions of the Cultural Revolution and the history of suffering it caused. As to my own frustrations and triumph, after first meeting him, I was always with my mentor Josei Toda and shared all his hardships with him. He frequently recited to us young people from the life of the prime minister Zhuge Liang related in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*. The song “A Star Falls in the Autumn Wind on Wuchang Plain,” by Japanese poet Bansui Doi (1871–1952) deals with Zhuge Liang. Mr. Toda loved it and used to have us sing it over and over. Empathy with the sorrow and loneliness of Zhuge Liang often brought tears to his eyes. But, firm as a boulder, he would tolerate no frustration of his own passionate efforts to instigate a pacifist movement to awaken people the threat posed to the future of all humanity by nuclear armament. His constant goal was the creation of a misery-free world through a Buddhism-based pacific, cultural, and educational movement.

As his primary disciple, I shared this goal. In the face of the severest business circumstances, even when, in the eyes of society, we seemed to be stymied, I protected him and strove to prevent obstruction of his plans. Indeed, I was firmly resolved to realize those plans in keeping with his expectations and in this way to open the way to still greater triumphs. This gave me the strength to overcome setbacks without disappointment.

As we built our organization, society gradually came to notice Soka Gakkai. Then, on July 3, 1957, I was unjustly imprisoned for two weeks on suspicion of having violated election laws in an Osaka-district election to fill a vacancy in the House of Councilors of the national Diet. As

everyone knew for a fact, I had repeatedly appealed against any violation of the rules. In the unbearable heat of prison, I was cruelly interrogated and craftily threatened with imprisonment for Mr. Toda if I refused to admit my own guilt. I was truly brought face to face with the evil of authority. In spite of his own weakened physical condition, to protect his disciple, Mr. Toda came to the offices of the Osaka Public Prosecutor, angrily demanding my release. Having already been imprisoned himself during the war and enraged by the unjust use of power, he was resigned to face jail again and the possibility of death to save me. The unshakable conviction that disciple protects mentor and mentor protects disciple was a spiritual bond between Mr. Toda and Mr. Makiguchi and between Mr. Toda and me. The affair remained in the courts for four and a half years. But truth will out. And, On January 25, 1962, I was judged innocent. The prosecution did not appeal.

Many things happened after I succeeded Mr. Toda, on May 3, 1960 to become third president of Soka Gakkai. On September 8, 1968, before an audience of over ten thousand students, I proposed normalization of relations between China and Japan. For this I was severely criticized both at home and abroad. In spite of all attempts to pressure me, however, I persevered in my conviction that continued abnormal conditions between Japan and a neighboring nation to which it owes a great cultural debt was a major calamity for the stability of Asia and the future of Chinese and Japanese youth. I was convinced that, no matter what the difficulties, we must open the way to Sino-Japanese amity. Now more than forty years later, I am still determined to work for long-lasting peace and friendship between our nations.

A jealous plot arose in 1979, when I retired as Soka Gakkai president and when the organization was continuing to make rapid forward strides. Hiding behind their authority, a reactionary priesthood and others repeatedly attacked me. Some were rash enough to implement cowardly plans to disrupt our organization itself. Later, a central figure in the plot instigated a case of extortion for which he was arrested and convicted in a way that seriously damaged his own life.

At the time, I found it impossible to speak freely at conferences. Articles about me in our own newspaper *Seikyo Shimbun* were strictly regulated. Still, in keeping with my vow as Josei Toda's disciple, I went on struggling to protect our organization and our invaluable members, who are fundamental to peace. House by house, I visited our comrades in the struggle, encouraging each person I visited, and talking with young people to cultivate human resources. Immediately before my resignation, I met Deng Yingchao (1904–92), wife of Premier Zhou Enlai, in Japan

and she urged me to remain in my post. She said I was still young and should by no means retire as long as I continued to enjoy the support of the people. It is indeed on the anonymous masses of the people and heart-and-mind communications among them that Soka Gakkai International is founded and today works actively in 192 countries and regions.

All of his life, Nichiren Daishonin, in whom we believe, was subjected to sometimes life-threatening persecution from people in authority. In spite of it all, however, he never for a moment backed down or stopped proclaiming justice. He said, “To be praised by fools—that is the greatest shame.” Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who was imprisoned for resisting the Japanese militarist government, said that his being hated by fools was his greatest glory. He also said that, in comparison with what Nichiren Daishonin suffered, his own hardships were insignificant. Soka Gakkai has triumphed because it has never bowed to adversity and has always moved resolutely forward. Its foundation would have been less steadfast if its course had been smooth and free of difficulties.

But to return to your experiences, you say that your suffering in the Cultural Revolution was “not all that great.” Still I imagine that those were ten very difficult years for you. As you look back on it, how do you interpret the Cultural Revolution now? By way of a testimony for the future, describe its influence on you personally and on your homeland.

### *Suffering Persecution Makes Convictions Firm*

**Gu:** In the autumn of 1968, I was sent to work at Rolling Mill No. Three, a crude little plant outside Dongzhimen in Beijing. I was a helper at the steel-strip rolling shop, carrying and stacking rolled strips weighing about 50 kilograms each. As I learned first from this experience, at the time Chinese rolling technology was primitive. Even strips as wide as 20 centimeters pressed by machinery were usually rolled by hand of the workers who wore heavy gloves to control and wind the bands. Even a moment’s inattention, and the steel could snap back. The difficulty and danger of the work were unimaginable.

Every morning before dawn, I had to ride a bicycle against piercing cold winds the tens of kilometers between the plant and the place where I lived. Carrying steel strips for more than a month of my stay at the rolling mill gave me inflammation in the tendons of my hands, which have not recovered to this day.

In the autumn of 1970, on orders from Lin Biao (1907–71) all schools, including ours, were disbanded and dispersed into the country.

We were sent to work at the Fangshan Dongfanghong oil refinery (in what is now the Beijing Yanhua district). The state developed a chemical-industrial base there in what in our time was desolate wasteland. My first job was erecting framework for a work hut. After that was finished, I went to work as a boiler man making standard concrete slabs using steam. The labor was extraordinarily hard. We worked three shifts daily, with frequent night duty. I was on this job for a full three months.

Seeing that I was thin, small, and weak, a young local farmer on my gang befriended me and often helped me out. After the Cultural Revolution, he worked for the Beijing municipal government and used to bring us rice grown in his village. I sent cigarettes and food to him too. Unfortunately we later lost touch. I pray he is living a happy life.

When this tour of work ended, after the Lunar New Year of 1971, I was sent to work at Linfen in Shanxi Province. Before the Cultural Revolution, to be prepared in case of a war with the Soviet Union, Beijing Normal University set up a branch school at the base of mount Lüliangshan. During the Revolution, however, it became Officers School No. 57 for our reformation through labor. The name derived from that of a school for officer labor training on the basis of Mao Zedong's principles set forth on May 7, 1966 to the effect that students must learn from the military, the workers, and the peasants. We worked on the slopes of mount Lüliangshan on rough, completely uncultivated ground. Before we could plant anything there, we had to turn barren slopes into terraced fields. It was an immense engineering task that we had to perform without machinery. We leveled the land with iron hoes and then planted wheat on it. Because we had no fertilizers, 25 kilograms of seed grain sown in one *mu* (1/15 hectare) produced a crop of only 75 kilograms the following year. In the next year, we kept pigs and composted the land with their manure. However, we had only 125 kilograms per *mu* that year. In addition to farming, we had to dig cave dwellings to live in over a predicted long stay. Different from the ones the local people inhabited, our cave dwellings were faced with tiles and were warm in winter and cool in summer. At the time, they were the best in the village.

I worked there for a full two years. The work was tiring, but I was in good spirits and comparatively calm because remote from the uncertainties and turmoil of the outside world. I came to understand the Chinese farming village better, acquired knowledge about agriculture, and grew physically more robust. From childhood, I was short, thin, and weak. I never dreamed that one day I would be able to tote water vats weighing more than 50 kilograms or speedily reap wheat. The following year, I was to see how effective my training had been when new comrades-in-

arms, young enough to be my students, could not equal me for lifting drain pipes and were slower at reaping than I was.

There were several experienced teacher in our work group. For example, Peng Fei, the veteran head of the education department; He Ziquan from the history department; Guo Yuheng from the Chinese-literature department; and Wu Hongmai from the mathematics department. All of them were over 60 years old. Working together, we got to know each other better and became good friends. I still fondly remember how we referred to ourselves as the Battle Comrades of the Fifty-seventh.

To your inquiry concerning my feelings about the Cultural Revolution, in a word, I can describe it as calamitous for individuals and for the nation as a whole. But, as Shakyamuni teaches, for each person, calamity is a baptism. Or perhaps it was an instance of how, in the words of Premier Zhou Enlai, “Great waves cleanse the sand.” The calamity divided the pure grains from the dross clearly exposing the truth about human beings.

It was a baptism for me too. As you express it, waves grow all the more stubborn when they encounter obstacles. Direct physical experience during the Revolution strengthened my resolve to stand undaunted by events occurring around me. That is why I always advise my students to be as tough and strong in themselves as pine trees are.

### *Passing Through Trials to Reach the Pinnacle*

**Ikeda:** A very moving relation of how you overcame inexpressible hardships. In itself your life is a supreme model for posterity. Buddhism teaches that “the pine tree, which withstands the frost, is called the king of trees.”<sup>3</sup> You, too, rise as a monarch because you overcame great hardship.

In token of the honor we pay to the mentors whose martyrdom is the point of origin from which Soka Gakkai success has developed, in the Makiguchi Memorial Building in Tokyo, we display a large painting (three meters tall and five meters wide) of Mount Chomolungma (Everest) presented to us by Chang Shuhong and his wife, who, like you, suffered through the calamitous Cultural Revolution. In discussing their mental state at the time, they fervently told me that painting the picture while experiencing those hard times had been an encouragement to surmount difficulties and strive to re-attain the loftiest cultural peaks. “The picture represents views from an altitude of five or six thousand meters. At these heights one gets a real sense of the thickness of the ice and the roughness of the path. Even so, it is necessary to continue toward the

top. It takes more than strength of body. It takes strength of mind as well. Those were difficult times, but no one can fetter the mind. The picture was painted as if looking up to Chomolungma with the attitude that hope is boundless and that our own hopes can despise all hardships.”

After having survived severe disaster, you have reached the paramount place in current Chinese pedagogy and a position of powerful national leadership. Your example proves that those who endure extreme trials with inflexible courage and hope truly attain the pinnacle.

In the next installment I should like to delve more deeply into your pedagogic theories.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> Nikolai Ostrovsky, English trans. by R. Prokofieva, *How the Steel Was Tempered* (2 vols.), 2nd. English edition (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), vol. 2, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1999), p. 287.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 845.

### **Daisaku Ikeda**

Recipient of 297 (as of August 2010) 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, 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 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.